Week ending February 28 1953
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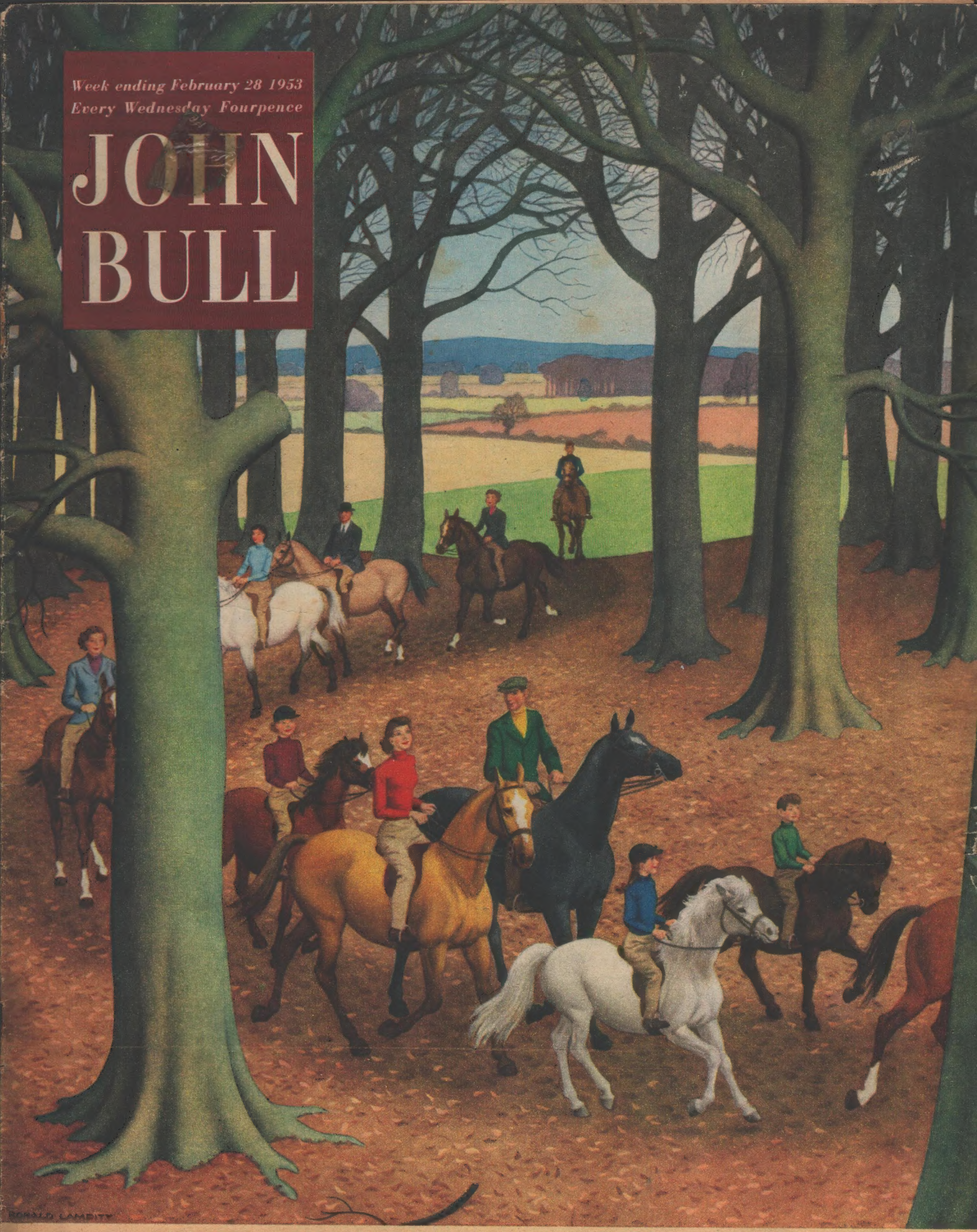

The Queen's Holiday Village—Portrait of Ballater

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RHEUMATISM ATTACKS YOUNG AS WELL AS OLD

MOTHER OF FIVE (38) | **PENSIONER (72)**

Recent photograph of Mrs. Edwards

Recent photograph of Mr. Gillett

BOTH SAY

Fynnon Salt relieved their rheumatic pain

'I really must tell you . . . the wonderful relief Fynnon Salt gives' *writes 38-year-old Mrs. Hetty Edwards of Stamford Hill.* 'I am the mother of five and cannot afford to be off my feet. I get attacks of Fibrositis and for months have suffered agony . . . but someone recommended Fynnon Salt. Now at the first sign of pain I take it. The results are marvellous.'

Mr. W. H. Gillett, 72, gardener of Headcorn, Kent, shares Mrs. Edwards' enthusiasm for Fynnon. 'I am an old age pensioner, several years ago I suffered with Rheumatism and for a long time I could not get my arm up to shave,' *Mr. Gillett writes.* 'I took to taking your Fynnon Salts and am still taking them, my Rheumatism has disappeared thanks to your Salts. I always recommend them to my friends.'

How Fynnon can help

THESE stories—two of many—are not surprising, for Fynnon provides a treatment agreeing with modern scientific findings on rheumatism. They show that it occurs most among the over-65's. But they also show that it often starts between 25-45, and doctors agree that the time to stop rheumatism is when the first twinges occur. Fynnon acts as a two-way attack on impurities.

1. It is an effective but gentle laxative, using body fluid filtered through intestinal tissues to rid the system of waste matter.
2. It acts as a diuretic, flushing and clearing the kidneys and reducing the impurities in the blood—approved treatment for many rheumatic conditions.

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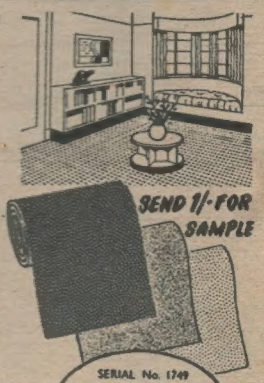

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EDITORIAL

Beach perils

ALL round our coasts the yellow sands and shifting pebbles are marred with jagged pieces of broken glass and long smears of filthy sludge.

These twin menaces of the beach spoiled last year's holidays for countless families. Now is the time to consider a spot of effective cleaning-up action for this summer.

The oil ruins clothes, towels and beach-bags. The glass sends hundreds of victims to hospital, while thousands more are treated at first-aid posts.

MISS MARY H. MELLOR, Divisional Superintendent of the St. John Ambulance Brigade at Brighton, says: "We treated 380 cases of glass wounds in legs and feet from May to September last year. I spend a great deal of time in our hut near the West Pier. Most of the cases are children, and we get used to seeing terrible cuts and gashes."

MISS MELLOR
"Most cases are children"

THE glass comes from bottles which are thoughtlessly abandoned by picnickers and then often broken by youngsters, who find it an agreeable game to shy stones at them.

As the law stands now, beach inspectors can only give a warning, calling a policeman who may issue a summons. This is so clumsy a method of law enforcement that there was only one conviction in Brighton last year.

Not that Brighton is any worse than other towns. Porthcawl's beach hut treats four hundred cases a month; Margate, despite a special squad of inspectors, scouring the beaches, had 583 cases in 1951; on the banks of the Thames at Richmond, a hundred cases have been dealt with in one afternoon.

SHIPS which empty the sludge from the bottom of their tanks into the sea are responsible for the oil.

This contamination increases each year. Already eighty-five per cent of the world's shipping is powered by oil, against fifty per cent before the war.

James Callaghan, M.P., chairman of an all-party unofficial committee, says: "If ships were not allowed to leave port until they had cleared out their sludge, I am convinced that seventy per cent of the oil on the beaches would be avoided."

Those planning their holidays look to the government for action: to make a drive on the glass-breakers and force ships to clean out in port.

THIS WEEK'S COVER

OUT walking in the beech woods near his home in Kent, Ronald Lampitt often watches the local riding schools out for a canter. Lampitt himself is not a rider—his relaxation is gardening—but his two young daughters are keen to learn. "I am continually being 'got at' to let them take it up," he says. Girls, in fact, far outnumber boys at the riding schools nowadays. It seems that boys prefer to badger their parents for Hopalong Cassidy outfits.

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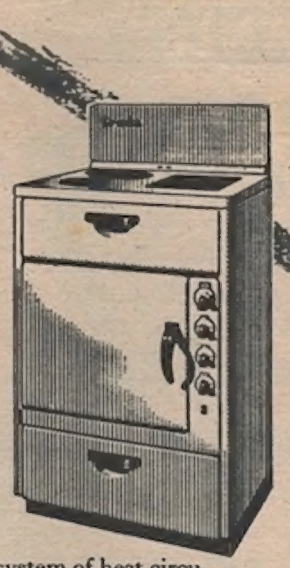

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Start taking Phillips Tonic Yeast today. It is simply pure yeast with all its cells intact; it contains no drugs or harmful ingredients and it is bound to do you good. But be sure to ask for 'Phillips' Tonic Yeast.

At all Chemists 1/6, 3/6 *and* 5/9

FREE SPEECH

The men who never forget the bill

DURING the past year we have engaged various tradesmen to put our house in order. The chimney sweep came first and borrowed my flue brush to finish the job. The plumber required a basin and a torch to facilitate his repair. The joiner borrowed my coal hammer and asked me for a couple of nails; I had none of the type he wanted, so he had to send his boy back to the workshop for them. The builder's labourer asked for dusters and rags, and a brush and shovel to clean up. A man from a furniture store came to fix new curtains. I had no steps, so I had to go from room to room with him, moving my kitchen table, with a trunk on top, for him to stand on. The last straw was the haulage contractor who asked me to help him with packages for removal. He explained that he had forgotten to bring an assistant to help to load them on to his lorry.

Tradesmen and contractors should be properly equipped for their work. All these people sent in their bills promptly. No allowances were made for the time, labour and materials which I supplied.—Mrs. M. S., Scotland.

Women At Work

MEN are often accused of being untidy at home. But it is the women who are untidiest in the office. Desk drawers are littered with cosmetics, knitting and the discarded contents of many handbags. Even the typewriters are defenceless. I am a typewriter mechanic, and inside the machines, among eraser dust from innumerable mistakes, I have found pens, pencils, hat pins, staples, needles and paper clips. Remarks such as "Why, that's the pen I lost last week" are commonplace when I am cleaning a machine.—A. Taylor, Bolton, Lancs.

Hitching Rails

DOGS are properly barred from most food shops and from many post offices. But the dog owners should be considered. If rails were put up out-

side those premises which do not admit dogs, the animals could be hitched to them while their owners were shopping inside.—Miss A. M., Renfrewshire.

Plainly Awkward

TELEPHONES are usually installed in the hall. No part of the house could be more inconvenient. A year ago the engineers came with ours and, as I was out and had not discussed with my wife the best place for it, the phone was fixed on a ledge of the hatstand. In winter we have to remove layers of coats and scarves to reach it. By the time we get to the hall and grasp the phone, the caller has rung off, convinced that no one is in. There is never a chair to sit on while answering, and no room to write notes. The family suffers from colds, because the hall is chilly, and from indigestion—the phone always seems to ring in the middle of meals. The best place for a phone is in the dining-room.—E. A., Littlehampton, Sussex.

Guilty Feeling

IN a Manchester store, a well-dressed man in front of me picked up an article from the counter, priced at 5s. 11d. He waited to be served, but the two assistants continued talking. He put the box under his arm and walked away. I didn't know whether to shout "Stop thief!", tell the assistants, call the manager, or grab him myself. I found myself following the man. He turned at the top of the stairs and saw me. He looked at me, hesitated, looked across at the assistants, who were still talking, then turned and walked out of the store with the box firmly under his arm. I have had a guilty feeling ever since.—Mrs. B. L., Cumberland.

IN JOHN BULL NEXT WEEK
Twelve-page
HOME DECORATING
supplement
see page 12
—and the start of a great new real-life adventure
see page 22

Cul-de-sock

THE term stocking street ("Free Speech," February 7) is one of several used in Worcestershire to describe a dead-end or cul-de-sac. Sock street is a variation. Most popular today is the term pudding-bag, but older inhabitants refer to a Roundhead, or to a Charley-bag, relic names of the English Revolution.—J. W., Worcester.

Maker Knows Best

WHY cannot knitting needles be graduated in inches? This would avoid periodical measuring to check lengths.—John Prentice, Westfield Avenue, Fareham, Hants.

A manufacturer says: "The cost would make the needles very expensive. Any method of marking would soon wear off in use, and a tape measure is much better than a rigid article like a needle."

In The Garden

HOW many of your male readers, I wonder, are being prodded into action by their wives, after accompanying Richard Dimbleby "Down Your Garden" (John Bull, January 31)? Throughout the week, packets of seeds have been arriving by every post, while the coloured centre-spread of your gardening supplement stares at me from the mantelpiece. I shall have to get cracking on those annuals and dressings!—J. C. Rush, Kett's Hill, Norwich, Norfolk.

. . . There are many benefits to be got by joining a local horticultural society. Since I joined mine six months ago, for a modest fee of 4s., I have been taken under the wing of an expert gardener who has given me valuable advice and a lot of cuttings. On Sunday mornings he looks over my garden fence and tells me what I ought to be starting next. Another member calls for orders of manure, shrubs and plants, as we get them a little cheaper when ordered in bulk. I'm not only learning the right way, but also how gardening makes the whole world kin.—J. N. M., Lancs.

. . . I once knew an old gardener who sowed seed according to the phases of the moon. He firmly believed that by so doing he obtained better crops. The moon influences tides, but does it affect plant growth?—H. C. Cradduck, Katherine Gardens, London, S.E.9.

Botanists and scientists experimented for years to try to find out. Result—not proven.

Valuable Bottles

FREQUENT appeals are made to the English public to return empty milk bottles. Here in France a deposit of fifty francs (about one shilling) is required for each bottle—far more effective than any number of appeals.—Brian H. Reilly, rue de Châteaudun, Belfort, France.

Best Friends Below

PIT ponies are fast disappearing with the mechanization of our coalmines. In a colliery at Cannock Chase there is a pony who will take a pinch of snuff with anybody. Miners who hang their jackets at the sides of the pit roads have found a great hole where the pocket should have been. To get at the miner's food the pony eats pocket and all. They can eat oranges and spit out the peel, and enjoy a chew of tobacco. They have an uncanny feel for their job and know exactly when the right number of tubs have been fastened behind them, steadfastly refusing to pull an extra one.—Mrs. L. Anne Fullard, Pye Green, Hednesford, Staffs.

Nurses In Trilbies

MALE district nurses are little known by the public. New patients greet me with blank stares, and I have been mistaken for a postman, gas man, ambulance driver, and even a detective. One woman, on being told who I was, called upstairs: "Dad, here's the sister—only it's a brother today."—Geoffrey Hunt, S.R.N., Q.N., Kingston-on-Thames, Surrey.

Always A Laugh

WHEN Jimmy Edwards came to Aberdeen to be installed as Rector of the University, a student appeared in front of him carrying an extended steel tape rule, and proceeded to measure the moustache. But Jimmy would have no half-measures. Seizing each end, he roared indignantly: "Stretch it out, man, stretch it out!" The length? Just over seven inches.—Student, Aberdeen.

. . . Jimmy mentions that, after ferrying a bomber to North Africa ("Take It From Me," John Bull, February 7), he was introduced to the wine muscatel. After innocently imbibing several mugs of

Letters intended for publication should be as brief as possible and include the sender's full name and address. John Bull pays a guinea for every letter printed. Readers with personal problems should send inquiries (other than medical) to John Bull Free Advice Service with a stamped addressed envelope for reply.

it, he woke up next day on the floor of the mess. Jimmy commits a common mistake in calling this wine muscatel. The golden, syrupy-sweet wine that he drank was muscat. I was in Africa about the same time, and found myself flat on the sand after being introduced to this drink. Thenceforth, the squadron bought jerricans-full of it from local vineyards, and we soon grew muscat-resistant. Muscatel is a lighter drink. — GEOFFREY WOOD, Chigwell, Essex.

This week's instalment of "Take It From Me" starts on page 19.

Savers Surprised

FOR three years a friend and I saved threepenny pieces. One day we turned them all out on the floor to count. Looking up I saw the window cleaner staring goggle-eyed at us through the window. Half an hour

later, as we were about to leave for the bank, two policemen, and the assistant matron of the hospital where we work, burst into the room. We got off with a warning to "always pull the blind."—MISS M. E., Essex.

Parents In Class

THERE has been much criticism of young illiterates. I have read many notes from parents over the last eighteen years, and when they visit schools in a critical mood, I sometimes feel tempted to force them into a desk to attempt to solve their child's last test in arithmetic or English.—W. S., Westgate, Kent.

If War Comes

WHAT is the objective of Captain B. H. Liddell Hart's article, "If I Were Stalin's War Chief" (JOHN BULL, February 7)? If his hopes are false then the whole thing is merely mischievous. If sound, then faith in any future for our island is worthless. If his purpose is to spread despondency, or to encourage the Russians to annihilate us, then the article is dangerous.—T. S. FLETCHER, Bolton, Lancs.

. . . Capt. Liddell Hart tells us that the Civil Defence appeal was a flop. The government should circulate his article to the whole nation. It would shake some people out of their attitude that everything will be all right in the end because Britain always wins the last battle. We may never have a "last battle" to fight. — M. A. HUGHES, Lockwood, Yorks.

. . . Liddell Hart refers to the Soviet TuG-75 long-range bomber. I was unaware that the designation was known here. The TU-4 bomber is a

B-29 bombing North Korea

TU-4 from a Soviet newsreel

copy of the American B-29 Superfortress, not the B-17 Flying Fortress. —G. R. HAIGH, Barnsley, Yorks.

Comment by Liddell Hart: "The TuG-75 is certainly known in official places. The TU-4 is modelled on the B-29, but both were developed from the Flying Fortress."

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By the banks of the Dee lies Balmoral Castle, the focal point of Ballater's life. For a hundred years Royalty has spent its Highland holidays here

BALLATER

The Queen's Holiday Village

by RONALD W. CLARK

Ever since Queen Victoria fell in love with the Highland hamlet, Royalty has had a soft spot for Ballater. Here is a portrait of its people, who help to make the Royal Family's holidays happy

IT IS LITTLE MORE than 350 paces from the rough grey bridge over the River Dee, which Queen Victoria opened in 1885, to the low-built wooden station where Queen Elizabeth the Second leaves the Royal train and begins her eleven-mile drive from Ballater to Balmoral Castle. It is about five hundred paces from Cairn Villas, at the eastern end of the town, to the golf course at the western side. In between, laid out in a rectangular cross-hatch of streets whose regular pattern would do credit to a Roman town-planner, lies Royal Ballater, a hamlet a century ago, today a community of 1,313 people whose lives have been woven into the fabric of Royalty's regular visits to the Highlands.

Royalty has always had a soft spot for Ballater. A good example might have been seen, until recent years, two miles west of the town, where the Deeside road ends the long pull uphill and levels out for the nine-mile run to Balmoral Castle. Up the road from Ballater would come the open Royal carriage, drawn by four of the famous Greys. Just beyond the crest of the rise, on the flanks of Craigendarroch, the carriage would come to a halt beside a Royal car and the King, the Queen and the two Princesses would leave the carriage, enter the car and speed off to

Royal Ballater, showing the bridge over the River Dee which Victoria opened in 1885. The village is about forty miles from Aberdeen

Nearly all of Ballater's shops have grown under Royal patronage. Typical is that of seventy-two year old Jock Harper, who once supplied Balmoral Castle with horses and now hires out bicycles

The men who greet the Royal train as it steams into Ballater: Provost J. P. Craig and Charles Milne, the stationmaster, inspect the Royal waiting-room

Balmoral while the carriage followed at a slower pace.

Ballater, the King knew, looked forward to the sight of the Greys every year and, even though the pressures of life made the complete carriage-journey too slow, he saw that Ballater was not disappointed.

From the nearby 1,200-foot summit of Craigendarroch, Ballater looks like a toy town, all its details laid bare. Yet Ballater has remained, for most British citizens, only a name on a map, its character and personalities equally unknown.

Only One Pub Allowed

Virtually all of Ballater is owned by the young Laird of Invercauld, Captain A. A. C. Farquharson, chief of the name of Farquharson and head of the clan, who lives with his raven-haired wife in Invercauld House, fourteen miles up the valley from Ballater. Among the ancient traditions which he still carries on is one under which only a single licensed house is allowed in the whole of Ballater—the Invercauld Arms.

The spirit of the little town, with its shops emblazoned with the insignia of Royal Warrant-holders, with its flourishing picture postcard trade and its sombre background of great hills, is elusive and, when found, contradictory. Power lines today march up Deeside, and both Balmoral Castle and Birkhall have recently been connected to the grid. The names of the Ballater men who were killed in the second World War are cut on the granite war memorial in alphabetical order and not, as were those of the first World War, in order of rank. Yet there still remain those distinct social layers which the Victorian invasion of Ballater laid over the Highland system.

During the short summer season, when tourists pack the hotels, guesthouses and "digs," and queue outside Strachan's Garage for trips up and down Royal Deeside, Ballater has the uncomfortable air of a Highland Blackpool. But during the short winter days and long nights, when for months snow may blanket the ground and shuttered Balmoral Castle is run by a skeleton staff, the spirit of Ballater is not very different from that of the Highland hamlet with which Queen Victoria fell in love.

The Royal Shopkeepers

In one way the town is unique—in the percentage of shopkeepers who, as warrant-holders, proudly display the Royal Arms. There is George Smith, "fishing-tackle maker to the King," whose window displays the forty-two pound salmon that was once caught in Birkhall Water; Knowles, the jewellers, where the Queen Mother occasionally makes a purchase; and Collie's, where young Douglas Smith receives the letters from Buckingham Palace listing what groceries should be sent to the castle for the Royal visit each autumn or spring.

On the red-letter days when the Royal train arrives at Ballater Station there are two people of major importance in the small reception committee. One is the provost, the other is the stationmaster. By tradition, the stationmaster has become almost as important as the provost.

The tradition was forged by Grant, the almost legendary stationmaster from 1907 to 1933. He used to greet personally not only every member of the Royal Family arriving at the station but, if possible, every visitor arriving there for the first time. Moreover, the visitor would invariably find, at the end of his stay, that the slender six-foot figure, trim and in immaculate uniform, was waiting on the platform to wish him a pleasant journey.

Today Grant lives happily in retirement in "The Cottage"—an elegant house belying its name. He proudly shows guests the Royal-crested photographs of King George V and Queen Mary which their Majesties gave him in 1933. The King also gave him a bejewelled Prince of Wales feathers tiepin. "He told me to wear it always, and I have worn it every day since," says Grant.

The task of organizing the station reception today falls on Charles Milne, stationmaster since 1947. He must see that the station flag is hauled up as the train comes in, and that the magnificently panelled Royal waiting-room, with its purple-upholstered chairs, is trim and ready.

Of prime importance on official occasions in Ballater is the provost, J. P. Craig, the brown-eyed little schoolmaster who was elected to the position last summer. Craig, who lives with his fair-haired wife in a pleasant house next to the school, came to Ballater at the end of the war. On him has fallen the task of arranging the town's Coronation celebrations, including the handling of the "arrangements" when the Royal train arrives. He explains that the "arrangements" include a point of importance in a small community such as Ballater — the use of the football ground by the troops who are billeted for the duration of the Royal visit in the low stone barracks on the outskirts of the town. "Girls' school in the morning, troops in the afternoon, and football team in the evening," is the compromise.

Did Not Recognize Prince

Nearly all the local shops grew under Royal patronage, or developed through the custom of tourists who use Ballater as a base for their "Royal Deeside" holidays. Typical of the first is the bicycle business run by seventy-two year old Jock Harper, who once supplied many of the horses for Balmoral, and now supplies the staff with bicycles.

Jock, whose shop is festooned with regimental trophies and souvenirs, is one of the Ballater worthies. Queen Mary once said to him: "The thing I really like about you, Harper, is that you never change your tongue."

"Today," he says regretfully, "there are no horses at the castle, only hill ponies." But he has adapted himself to the change by repairing punctures and hiring bicycles. "Prince Philip came in and borrowed a bike while he was at Birkhall on his honeymoon," says Jock. "I didn't recognize him at first, and asked him what he thought of the government. 'I can't talk about politics,' he replied." Jock made some rather forceful remark which showed that he had strong political views. "Maybe you're right," said Philip as he wheeled out his bicycle for the two-mile ride back to Birkhall.

Birkhall, a quiet-looking little house with a single and rather incongruous green sentry-box, is little known even to regular visitors to Ballater, for it is in a secluded position up lonely Glen Muick. It is run by the two elderly Misses Mackenzie, who give the place a charm which more than makes up for its lack of splendour.

Queen Victoria's Castle

Ballater takes note of Birkhall, on the fringe of the Royal estates, but it is on Balmoral, eight miles up the valley, that attention is focused. The castle lies about three hundred feet higher, an impressive building put up by Queen Victoria's order on the site of a more ancient castle on the southern bank of the river. Across the river lies Crathie, around whose church and post office the whole excitement of Royal visits once revolved. Today, Crathie is a short line of cottages, a granite, red-spired church, and a grey vicarage. The post office came before Queen Victoria, and Alexander Thompson, the dour, middle-aged postmaster, remembers his grandfather describing how the place was built in 1843, just ten years before the Queen built the castle across the way.

"Father used to tell me how the Queen held a fête to raise money to build the new church," says Thompson, into whose small cottage-cum-office the tourists crowd every year for souvenirs. "There was no public phone in those days, and all the reporters queued up in the

The event Ballater awaits. In typical British weather, the Royal Family arrive for their holidays last year and are welcomed by The Black Watch

office to telegraph their accounts of the fête."

Once, the Thompsons handled all Royal mail that went into the castle. Today, the Queen's postmaster accompanies her from London. One clerk comes with him from Buckingham Palace and another comes from Aberdeen, and, together with two ex-Servicemen who have been brought to Balmoral every year since the end of the first World War, they open shop in an improvised post office in the castle. During the Queen's residence, to save time, the Royal mail follows a different route from ordinary letters and parcels coming in to Crathie.

Alexander Thompson is one of the two "characters" of Crathie. The other is the Rev. John Lamb. As rector of Crathie parish, which has about 150 families scattered across its mountainous miles, he takes the services attended by the Royal Family at Crathie every Sunday.

The rector has rather mixed ideas about the crowds—sometimes five thousand strong—which press round the church for a glimpse of the Royal Family at the end of their short drive from the castle to the church.

"Their Majesties come to the services naturally, as part of their holiday here," he says. "And, as with anything else that adds to the value and dignity of life, they admire and enjoy them." When Royalty are present, the National Anthem is played at the end of the service; otherwise it is identical with those held every other Sunday morning.

Preparations for the Royal visits begin in Ballater many weeks before the Royal train pulls into the station. The first news of when the Queen can be expected comes from Major Haig, the factor, who works in an office in the castle. He has to hire dozens of additional workers, for during most of the year only a skeleton staff lives and works at Balmoral under the housekeeper, Miss Campbell. About a hundred servants usually travel in the retinue from Buckingham Palace.

Accommodation is a problem, and many of the staff have to be boarded out—a result of the extensive alterations which have been made in the castle since the days when its plumbing was a stock joke among visiting politicians.

Donald McHardy, the Queen's head stalker, has to sift reports from the ghillies so that he can advise Her Majesty on the chances of sport on the estate, which stretches southwards to include 3,786-ft. Lochnager, and eastwards until it marches with Captain Farquharson's Invercauld estate.

Across the river from Balmoral lies Crathie. Two of its "characters" are postmaster Alexander Thompson and the Rev. John Lamb, whose Sunday services are attended by the Royal Family

The Pipers' Greeting

Edwin Stuart, the head gardener, who lives in a granite cottage beside the estate golf course, has to hire additional part-time gardeners to trim the beds and sweep the lawns of the grounds, which are open twice a week to the public throughout the summer. Workers are needed to swill out and clean the great white and green deer-larder, which stands in the grounds to the north of the castle, and the circular salmon-larder with its polished scales, hooks and baskets.

Pipe Major Macdonald travels up from Buckingham Palace with his pipers, ready to pipe at eight in the morning and after dinner—one of the Balmoral traditions that still survives.

Down in Ballater, where the flags will be ready, there is the feeling that things are not, after all, so very different from the days when Queen Victoria first drove up the winding road from Aberdeen, took a liking to the hamlet, and thereby gave Ballater a significance it would never have achieved otherwise.

NEXT WEEK: James Reid—the village photographer who takes the Royal pictures

Amanda wants romance

by DON STANFORD

ILLUSTRATED BY WILLIAM SHOWELL

He had promised her parents he would find her a boy friend. But Amanda didn't want a boy. She wanted him

EVEN IN BERMUDA the setting would have been hard to beat: a very tiny cottage hidden, except for its white-guttered roof, by the glowing pink of a huge clump of flowering oleanders, and facing the sunlit sea. Beside the cottage a long, steep flight of limestone steps led down the cliff to a beach of coral sand, and on the small patch of well-barbered lawn at the top of the sea steps the morning sunshine fell caressingly upon a card table set for a single breakfast, and upon a fair-haired man attired only in a pair of faded khaki shorts and an extremely morose expression.

From within the cottage a cheerful clatter could be heard, rising above the blare of music from a radio, and George Bolt muttered imprecations upon all Bermuda maids as he raised his coffee with an unsteady hand, and promised himself that today he would sink that radio deep in the ocean. Today might just as well be devoted to such a chore: it was a cert he wasn't going to get anything done on the play script he was supposed to be writing, not in his present state of mind.

He was pondering moodily in this strain when the door of his cottage burst open and a Negro

girl in maid's uniform erupted to shake a bed-sheet vigorously in his face, upsetting the coffee-pot as she did so and causing George to leap, galvanized, to his feet.

"Oh, excuse me, Mistuh Bolt!" the maid exclaimed contritely, standing back to eye her employer with a mildly speculative gaze, and preparing the conversational opening for the morning. There was a matter of information to be extracted from George Bolt this morning, and if a little coffee had to be wasted in the process of bringing him round to the point where he'd talk, it was well worth it.

"Pardon the hell out of me, too," George muttered, swabbing at his scalded chest with a napkin.

The maid widened her eyes. Having established liaison and being able to shift subjects adroitly, she began happily: "Mistuh Bolt, that sho' was a nice cocktail party you had yesterday. It really was."

"Thanks, Frances," George mumbled, and added with grudging politeness: "And thanks for cleaning up afterwards. I don't know what I'd do without you."

Live a far less complicated life, he added mentally, keep my private affairs to myself, and——

"It was sure different from most of your parties," Frances said thoughtfully. "All them nice older people, 'stead of just a lot of girls; an' such nice people, too! Sir John Bailey an' his lady. My, I bet them nice friends of yours were mighty impressed! I mean, that Mistuh an' Missus Craig an' their pretty little daughter. They wouldn't have no way o' knowin' how much you see of Sir John, would they, Mistuh Bolt? An' it was kind of for them, the party, wasn't it?"

"Um," George grunted. He knew with awful certainty what was coming next, but he knew of no way to forestall it. Desperately, he said: "Look, Frances, go see if you can scrounge up some fresh coffee, will you? I've only had one cup."

"Directly, Mr. Bolt," Frances agreed serenely. "Mistuh Bolt, that little Miss Craig, she sure is a pretty little girl. She your girl, Mistuh Bolt?"

"No," George said flatly.

Frances eyed him sceptically and demanded: "Huccum she ain't yo' girl, 'f you want her so bad, Mistuh Bolt? You a good-lookin' man."

CAUGHT off his guard, George said, "Thank you, Frances." And before he realized that he hadn't admitted to wanting Amanda Craig at all, he'd already blurted out: "She's too young for me, Frances, that's huccum. Now, will you please go and get me my coffee?"

"How old she?" Frances asked with interest.

"She's nineteen. Please, Frances!"

"Ah'm twenty-one," Frances said thoughtfully. "She ain't so young. How old you, Mistuh Bolt—twenty-five, twenty-six?"

"I am thirty-four years old," George said grimly, and with masochistic satisfaction he watched Frances's mouth drop open and stay that way.

There was a long, pregnant silence, and then Frances spoke in a subdued voice, gently, kindly, consolingly, as to an ageing relative still beloved though well into his dotage. "Well, is that a fact? Well, I always said, Mistuh Bolt, I always thought an elderly man's kinda nice fo' a young girl!"

"Get out!" George said in a strangled voice, leaping to his feet.

"Yes, sir!" Frances exclaimed hurriedly, backing away. "I'll—I'll fetch you some nice fresh coffee right away, Mistuh Bolt."

"I don't want any more coffee!" George said savagely. "I'm going to have a swim. If I don't come back, Frances, don't give it a second thought. I may drown."

Filled with self-pity, a superannuated derelict beloved by none and deprived of even the pitiful solace of his second cup of coffee, he descended the steps and cast himself into the sea.

Floating on his back, far out near the reef, he squinted up at a cloudless sky and looked upon himself and cursed his fate. Life had been immensely kind to George Bolt, up to a week ago. Life had been his happy, laughing companion, life had belonged to George. But life had been just kidding him along, and now, without even decent warning, life had lowered the boom and George Bolt had had it. From a healthy, contented, athletic chap with a flock of friends and a full assortment of pleasurable hobbies a successful young playwright had plenty of time to indulge, George had suddenly plummeted into a situation wherein horses and ski-ing and salt water and the delights of travel held no allure for him—and his future no hope whatsoever. He had been envied for years; from now on, he would be an object of pity, and very probably scorn.

Young playwright!

"All things are relative," George quoted to himself sententiously. He flipped over and swam towards the coral rocks just offshore, where he knew of a grotto with an underwater entrance, a cool, silent cave of gloomy beauty far better suited to his mood of the morning than the warm sunlight outside.

He made a neat surface dive and swam under water through the coral tunnel, and came up standing chest-deep in the middle of the grotto. Dim, greenish light filtered in from somewhere above.

George hoisted himself on to a shelf of rock and groped behind him for the oilskin-wrapped package of cigarettes and matches he had cached here some time before. The first long pull of smoke tasted wonderful. He leaned back to let out his breath and think.

He was a cad and a louse, and he could endure it no longer. He was a rat, and a seducer of children, and it was painful to shave these mornings, because the sight of his own face disgusted him so. He was a false and Janus-faced betrayer of friendship, and for one long week now his conduct had been reprehensible in every way; and he had no intention of reforming. He could not give it up, this mad wickedness that had descended upon him, but, on the other hand, he could not go on as he was, hating himself for his furtiveness. It would simply have to be brought out in the open, that was all there was to it.

He had been perfectly happy a week ago, beating the stuffing out of his typewriter and acquiring a good, healthy tan and playing some tennis and occasionally taking his leisurely choice of the abundance of handsome young ladies he knew in Bermuda for a pleasant evening out.

George was a peripatetic man, driven by a constant restlessness to move from one place to another; but for several years now he had managed to spend a month or two each year on the Somerset end of Bermuda, and now his annual reappearance was greeted with mild enthusiasm by the year-round residents who had come to accept him as an eccentric and wandering neighbour.

HE'D been here about a month now, long enough to acquire his tan and an amiable set of intimates, and in his complete felicity he had been pleased that morning a week ago when the strange voice had summoned him, by telephone, to the fateful meeting.

"Mr. Bolt?" the masculine voice on the phone had begun. "My name is Craig, Albert Craig. We have a mutual friend, I believe, in Will Hanna. I'm at the Coral Beach Club with my wife and daughter for a week, and Will suggested I should ring you and ask if you might be free for a drink sometime."

Will Hanna had produced George's year-before-last play, but Will was a friend as well as a producer, and if Will Hanna wanted

"I don't think I could stay away from you," Amanda said. "I don't think I possibly could"

Amanda was childishly delighted. Sighing, she dropped her small dark head on to his shoulder. George sat rigid at her side, weakly resisting

George to show some people about Bermuda they would be nice people.

"Any time!" George had said promptly. "How about this afternoon?"

They had been nice people. Albert Craig had mentioned a daughter, George vaguely believed, and there was no daughter in sight, but Albert Craig was a big, pleasant, quiet man, every inch a gentleman, and his wife was a startlingly pretty little woman with a fresh vivacity and a droll sense of humour. They were possibly ten years older than George, who was entirely accustomed to accepting people ten years older as his contemporaries, and the three of them had liked one another from the first.

They'd seen two of George's plays, and they praised his work with diffident sincerity and no trace of embarrassing effusion, and George glowed and offered to show them the Somerset end of the island, and they said gratefully that they would like that.

"Ah—there's one thing," Albert Craig said apologetically, once it had been established that they were all good friends and could ask favours of one another. "I was wondering—ah—well, there's Amanda. Amanda's our daughter. Came out two years ago. She's still on the beach somewhere, but I'm afraid she may not be having a very good time on this trip. We don't know anyone her age here, you know, and——"

"Thousands," George said promptly and cheerfully, swallowing his drink; "literally thousands of young men around. I play tennis with about a score of 'em, Thursdays and Sundays, in Somerset. Let's see, now——"

"Helen and I are going out to dinner tonight," Albert Craig said vaguely, swirling the ice in his glass. "Old friends, the Kinnicutts. You probably know them? Be pretty dull for Amanda, I'm afraid. But——"

"Tell you what," George proposed, "tomorrow I'll round up a few eligibles for Amanda and hook 'em for tea in a day or two. Meanwhile, if you think she might be free for dinner tonight—if you don't happen to take her to the Kinnicutts—I'd be glad to——"

Well, they liked that idea, and Helen Craig had seemed perfectly sure that Amanda would like it, too. So George, after dressing for dinner that night, with a fine, tolerant, condescending sense of catering to the romantic tastes of children, had hired a horse-drawn carriage, complete with coachman, for real Bermuda flavour. And then he had ridden majestically back to the Coral Beach Club to bestow his magnanimity upon a child named Amanda Craig.

THAT was the first shock. Young Miss Amanda Craig was a smasher. She had been childishly delighted with George's equipage and his coachman, and George had been delighted with her delight.

She shared so many of his enthusiasms, had a quick intelligence and such intriguing if unsound—to George's way of thinking—opinions on the current theatre, that it was no chore at all to maintain conversation or easy, friendly laughter with Amanda.

And the atmosphere of Bermuda had helped, too, and George, who had so nonchalantly planned it for Amanda, was hoist with his own petard.

The breeze had gently wafted a myriad of floral scents over the occupants of the light, springily swaying carriage; the coachman sat with rigid dignity upon his box above them, behind the bored horse lazily clopping along the narrow country roads between high-walled estates and past the beauty of Bermuda gardens and the serene waters of the harbour.

Amanda sighed luxuriously at last, and innocently dropped her small dark head to George's shoulder, and George stiffened and sat rigidly, uncomfortably trying not to notice the fragrance of her hair or the warmth of her small body, and reminding himself frantically that for all her incomparable loveliness she was fourteen years and two months his junior.

But when the carriage had at last drawn up before the Coral Beach Club, she had lifted her head from his shoulder, and with her lashes still making two short, dark arcs on her creamy cheeks, she had put her mouth up trustingly, confidingly. "Good night, George," she murmured sleepily—and waited to be kissed.

George was never quite sure what happened then; he only knew it wasn't premeditated. Touched by the childish innocence of her, he bent his head to kiss the offered lips gently and briefly—and wham! he had Amanda locked hard in his arms, and her mouth was cool and sweet and fragrant as no other mouth had ever been in all of George's long experience, and Amanda's arms were wound around his neck and her slim fingers were playing at the back of his head, holding him close to her.

And then, while a part of George was doing mad handsprings and another part was coldly watching with stern detachment and a sneer for his idiocy, Amanda had pushed him away and looked at him carefully and said in a voice only slightly shaky and a tone of sheer wonder: "You know, George, you're the oldest man I ever kissed! And I wish you weren't so old, and I'm all mixed up, and I don't know whether I'm going to be amused or embarrassed in the morning—but please take me in now, George."

"Uggle," George Bolt had said clearly and distinctly and profoundly, and obediently he had taken her in and climbed back into the achingly empty carriage for the long ride home, and half-way there his mind had cleared suddenly and he had sat bolt upright, wide-eyed with horror.

Old! He wasn't old! And if Amanda was either amused or embarrassed in the morning, it was going to be unbearable!

HE didn't sleep very much that night, but by morning his sanity had returned. It had been a momentary aberration, that was all; a maniacal impulse compounded of a child's incredible beauty and the insidious atmosphere of a Bermuda night. He would simply round up some of the youngsters who played tennis at Somerset for Amanda, and he himself would not see her again at all.

And having so decided, George rose and dressed with feverish haste, and practically burnt up his motorized bike scorching off to the Coral Beach Club; and twenty minutes later he had balanced Amanda precariously upon the pillion seat and was preparing to shove off for a day's swimming under the benign gaze of her parents.

"If she wobbles, George," Helen Craig called cheerfully, "push her off on her right side. She's already got a scar on her left elbow from falling out of an apple tree."

He was master of the situation, of course. They had had their swim, and they had lain exhausted on the beach, breathing heavily and enjoying the good, spent feeling of physical fatigue, and laughing helplessly at nothing in particular, and George had skilfully established the relationship of gay young uncle to pretty young niece, and Amanda had seemed content and possibly even relieved to follow his lead. There hadn't been any mention of the night before, and there hadn't been any obvious constraint between them.

And then Amanda had sat up to inspect the box lunch Frances had prepared, and pushed it aside and looked straight at George and said, in the tone of one making a vastly novel discovery, "I'm not hungry."

"Neither am I," George said, and sat up and made the mistake of looking at Amanda, and all of a sudden there it was: the constraint, the acute discomfort of knowing that there was something around that couldn't be concealed

Continued on page 24

ANOTHER OUTSTANDING JOHN BULL SUPPLEMENT

HAVE A GO AT HOME DECORATING

With WILFRED PICKLES

Wilfred Pickles in his own home, with his wife

Biggest and best

The latest in the great line of JOHN BULL supplements—and the biggest yet—will be presented next week. In its twelve fascinating pages, Wilfred Pickles, who was a building worker in his youth, invites readers to "Have A Go At Home Decorating." His personal touch makes lively reading of the experts' advice, and he passes on many original ideas from the homes he has visited after asking *Can I Come In?*

Ideas from the stars

Pickles has persuaded many famous people to reveal their home-decorating ideas. Dirk Bogarde shows how he turned an awkward door into a useful cupboard. Dress designer Digby Morton has made brilliant use of mirrors. Peter Ustinov, Jeanne Heal, Googie Withers and Hermione Gingold show some of the original features from their own homes—ideas that anyone can imitate or adapt to his own use.

How to use colour

In the centre of the supplement is a remarkable illustration showing how to make the most of colour in home decoration. A sectional full-colour picture of two houses shows how redecoration can brighten an ordinary home. This striking feature vividly illustrates the basic colour principles, and special charts prepared in co-operation with the British Colour Council will give it lasting value for every reader.

Secrets of the experts

W. P. Matthew, the radio and television handyman, takes the novice through the difficulties of painting and papering walls and ceilings in easy-to-follow guides. Here is advice on things to do at every season—a supplement to greet the spring and live on throughout the year.

INSIDE EVERY COPY OF NEXT WEEK'S ISSUE

TEN YEARS AFTER by Captain B. H. LIDDELL HART

ROMMEL'S LAST FLING IN AFRICA

At Kasserine Pass, his "Napoleonic" stroke nearly turned the tables on Eisenhower and Montgomery. Here is the full story of how the blunders of his superiors wrecked his plan

KASSERINE WAS ONE of the most astonishing battles of the war—a bolt from the blue which hit the Allies like a bombshell. For more than three months since the crippling Battle of Alamein, Rommel had been retreating from one place to another in face of Montgomery's advance, being too weak to stand and fight anywhere. By February, 1943, he had gone back nearly 1,500 miles—one of the longest retreats in history.

He was in imminent danger from the rear as well as in front. For in November an American and British army under Eisenhower had landed in Algeria and Morocco and pushed east towards Tunis—Rommel's only remaining way of escape.

Although the advance was temporarily checked in the mountains covering Tunis, by German and Italian troops hurriedly rushed across from Sicily, it had then extended its American right arm southward to within close reach of the Gulf of Gabes. People in London and Washington were expecting early word that Eisenhower's forces had seized the coastal strip and thus blocked Rommel's escape-lane. Instead, they heard the staggering news that the Americans were reeling back under Rommel's blows.

Front Was Nearly Broken

Alexander, who now took over command of the front, said, "I found the position even more critical than I had expected," and that a continuation of Rommel's advance "would disrupt the whole front in Tunisia."

What had happened? The story of these dramatic events in Africa has often been told from the British and American points of view—by Eisenhower, Alexander and Bradley, as well as by lesser men. But there has been no adequate account of it from the German side. To get that, I have talked at length with officers who were close to Rommel, particularly General Bayerlein, his Chief of Staff at the time. I have also been fortunate in getting Rommel's own view, from the personal record he wrote soon after the event. It becomes evident that the battle would have taken a worse turn for the Allies if Rommel had been allowed a free hand.

On the allied side it was assumed that he held the supreme command. In reality, he was given this only on the day the battle ended—too late to redeem the lost opportunity. Three weeks earlier, as Bayerlein told me, Rommel was on the verge of being sacked!

That was the sequel to clashes behind the scenes, now disclosed. Back in the autumn, when Rommel saw that his forces were being

Hands in pockets, Rommel ponders in the desert during his retreat before Montgomery. He was a sick man—but he still had a strong kick in him

Rommel's son, Manfred, flies to Britain with his father's former Chief of Staff, General Bayerlein, for talks with Liddell Hart. The field-marshal's private papers have now been edited by Liddell Hart for book publication

battered to pieces in the Alamein line by Montgomery's overwhelming artillery and airpower, he had decided to slip away on the night of November 2, and bring his forces back to a new and better position at Fuka, fifty miles behind. That timely step-back would have thrown Montgomery's attack out of gear, and saved the German-Italian army from a crippling defeat. But when Hitler heard of the plan he telegraphed an order "to stand fast, yield not a yard of ground." The only effect of that fatuous order was to ensure that, when the British broke through Rommel's worn-thin front next day, they were able to capture most of his unmotorized troops before they could get away.

Yet Hitler's illusions soon revived, while Mussolini clung to his because he could not bear to see Italy's African empire crumbling away. So, once Rommel had got back to the frontier of Tripolitania, with the remnants he had managed to extricate, Hitler and Mussolini sent him orders to hold the frontier "at all costs."

Dodging The Knockout Blow

But Rommel felt, and bluntly said, that such an order meant the certain destruction of his remaining troops. So, when Montgomery had built up a large striking force on the frontier, and launched his intended knockout blow in mid-December, Rommel's troops slipped away just in time to evade it.

Away back in safely remote Rome, Mussolini now sent an order to "resist to the uttermost" on the next position, at Buerat. But when Montgomery struck at this, a month later, Rommel again slipped out of reach. He repeated the process on the Tarhuna-Homs line in front of Tripoli itself—pungently telling the Italian War Minister, Cavallero: "You can either hold on to Tripoli a few more days and lose the army, or lose Tripoli a few days earlier and save the army for Tunis. Make up your mind."

That settled the argument, but did not diminish the resentment of the distant dictators who were still erecting castles in the air. Mussolini's circle urged that Rommel should be removed from command, and found a ready ear in Hitler's. On January 26, Rommel received a telegram telling him that he was to hand over command after reaching the Tunisian frontier—the excuse being given that he was being relieved on account of the bad state of his health.

Rommel was a sick man—but he still had a strong kick in him. Instead of being dismayed by the Americans' close approach to his line of retreat through Tunisia, he scented a fine opportunity of striking there before Montgomery could again catch up with him. On the Tunisian frontier Rommel's troops had found shelter in the fortified Mareth Line, which the French had originally built to check an Italian invasion of Tunisia from Tripolitania. Although the fortifications were poor, the Line was an obstacle to tank attack and should at least delay Montgomery. Moreover, Rommel's own strength was reviving. In retreating westward, he had come nearer to the supply ports, and had gained more than he had lost in equipment.

A Brilliant Double Stroke

He now planned a double stroke in Napoleonic style, taking advantage of his central position. If he could crumble up the Americans behind him, he would have both hands free to tackle Montgomery's Eighth Army, which was now thinned out by the way its lines of supply had been stretched.

It was a brilliant plan, but Rommel had the heavy handicap of being dependent on forces not under his own control. He could spare only enough from the Mareth Line to form one combat-group. His famous and trusty 21st Panzer Division had passed under the command of von Arnim, whose forces defending Tunis had been kept independent of Rommel.

So Rommel had to leave Arnim to direct the main thrust, and merely do whatever he could to help it on. Moreover, to back up the 21st Panzer Division, Arnim sent down only half of the 10th. That was a disappointment to Rommel, and so was the fact that Arnim did not send any of the new Tiger tanks, nineteen of which had just been sent over to Africa.

The American 2nd Corps was the target. Its front covered three routes through the mountains to the sea, with spearheads at the passes near Gafsa, Faid, and Fondouk.

Allies Were Hoodwinked

At the end of January, the 21st Panzer made a sudden spring at the Faid Pass, and gained a sally-port for the bigger attack to follow. This coup made the Allies expect a possible German attack, but they expected it in the wrong place. Regarding the Faid stroke as a diversion, they believed that the attack would come through Fondouk, and kept their reserves near there.

On February 14, the 21st Panzer pounced again, this time to open the real offensive. Arnim's deputy, Ziegler, was in direct charge. Sweeping forward from the Faid Pass, it outflanked and trapped a large part of the U.S. 1st Armoured Division. The battlefield was strewn with blazing American tanks.

Rommel urged Ziegler to drive on during the night and exploit the success to the full. "The Americans had no practical battle experience, and it was for us to instil them with a deep inferiority complex from the outset." But Ziegler waited for forty-eight hours, until he had got Arnim's authorization, before pushing on twenty-five miles to Sbeitla, where the Americans had rallied. There, in consequence, he met stiffer opposition, although by evening he had overcome it and brought the Americans' total loss of tanks up to 150.

Meantime Rommel's own combat-group, which was launched farther south, had driven through Gafsa, then turned northwest, and by February 17 had advanced fifty miles farther through Feriana, to capture the American airfields at Thelepte. Alexander, who now arrived on the scene, says that "in the confusion of the retreat American, French and British troops had become inextricably mingled, there was no coordinated plan of defence and definite uncertainty as to command." Rommel heard that the Allies had set fire to their supply depots at Tebessa, forty miles on beyond the next mountain-range.

He wanted to exploit the confusion and panic by a combined drive with all the available mechanized forces through Tebessa. But he found that Arnim was unwilling to embark on such a venture. So Rommel sent his proposals to the Italian Supreme Command in Rome—counting on Mussolini's desire for "a victory to bolster up his internal political position."

Attack Changed Direction

The hours slipped by, and it was not until early on February 19 that a signal came from Rome authorizing the continued attack, and Rommel to conduct it—but ordering that it should be made *northward* to Thala, instead of *northwestward* through Tebessa. In Rommel's view that change was "an appalling and incredible piece of shortsightedness," for it meant that the combined thrust was "far too close to the front and bound to bring us up against the strong enemy reserves."

So the attack came where Alexander expected it. He had ordered Anderson, commander of the British First Army, "to concentrate his armour for the defence of Thala." That was fortunate as things went—but the Allied forces would have been caught off balance *if* Rommel had been allowed to drive the way he wished.

The approach to Thala was through the Kasserine Pass, between Sbeitla and Feriana. The Americans had gathered here in strength, and fought so stubbornly that the Pass was not captured until the evening of the 20th. When at last the Germans got through it, on the 21st, they drove into Thala, but were pushed out by the British 6th Armoured Division and other forces that had concentrated there to meet them. So Rommel, realizing on the 22nd that his chance had gone, broke off this offensive.

The very next day an order came from Rome putting all the forces in Africa under Rommel's command. It was too late to redeem the lost opportunity. It was also too late for him to cancel Arnim's planned attack in the north, for which Arnim had kept back forces which could have been far better employed in the southern stroke. Arnim's attack was a failure.

Worse still, it caused delay in releasing the divisions needed for Rommel's intended second stroke—against Montgomery. The delay made a vital difference to its prospects. Until February 26, Montgomery had only one division facing the Mareth Line. He admitted that, for once, he was worried, and his staff worked feverishly to redress the balance before the blow came. By March 6, when Rommel struck, Montgomery had quadrupled his strength. Besides four hundred tanks he had more than five hundred anti-tank guns in position. Thus, in the interval, Rommel's chance of striking with superior force had vanished. The attack was at a standstill by the afternoon, and Rommel broke it off, having lost fifty of his tanks.

Hitler Spurned His Advice

After this, Rommel came to the conclusion that it would be "plain suicide" for the German-Italian forces to stay any longer in Africa. He pointed out the dangers in a lengthy report, but received the answer that the Fuehrer was unable to agree with his judgment.

So Rommel flew to Europe in an effort to make his masters understand. On May 6, the over-extended front in Tunisia collapsed under the massive attack which Alexander delivered, and within a week all the Germans and Italians remaining in Africa—nearly 250,000—were in the bag. The lost chance at Kasserine had proved the last chance of upsetting the Allies' advance to victory in Africa. [*World Copyright*

Rehearsal for *Simple Symphony*, with Felicity Gray directing Michel de Lutry and Paula Hinton. "TV dancers," she says, "must have no bumps anywhere"

Felicity Gray puts TV on its toes

by LISA MOYNIHAN

She's made her ballet a star show by leaving out the moonbeams and fairies. It's more in the mood of Mrs. Mopp and Colonel Chinstrap

ONE OCTOBER DAY in 1946, Royston Morley, a senior drama producer on television, reluctantly kept a date in a West End bar with Felicity Gray, an unknown dancer and choreographer, who had been pestering him for a job. Before he had time to order drinks, she announced: "My idea for a TV ballet is nothing to do with fairies or moonbeams. It's *Itma*!" Laying her handbag on the bar, she began to mime Mrs. Mopp, with imaginary bucket and broom, then Colonel Chinstrap, staggering tipsily on points.

Royston Morley was as startled as anyone else in the bar. "But I could see that she had a good idea," he recalls. "I suggested going back immediately to Broadcasting House, where we could find a pianist and commandeer an empty studio—and where she could let off steam. Felicity had expected this move. 'No need to find a pianist,' she said. 'Madeleine Dring, who has written the music, has been waiting at Broadcasting House for the last half-hour.'"

Felicity Gray, now thirty-eight, tall, slim and poised, with an eager voice and a disarming smile, has since established ballet as a TV favourite. Cecil McGivern, TV Controller, says, "In 1948 there were only eleven ballet programmes: last year there were fifty, largely thanks to Felicity."

But although it was Felicity who wrote the scripts, rehearsed the dancers and worked behind the scenes, it was a dancer, David Paltenghi, who compèred the first *Ballet For Beginners* programmes. "I wanted a vibrant male, to take any namby-pamby flavour of ballet out of viewers' minds," McGivern explains. "But the first ones were such a success that masculine backing seemed unnecessary when we came to consider a second series. Then we wondered why we had not thought of Felicity as compère before."

One of the first programmes in which Felicity appeared included an explanation of the flexibility of a dancer's muscles—"They are like a two-way stretch suspender belt, while those of a non-dancer are like a piece of ordinary elastic." At rehearsal, the producer, Philip Bate, was startled to find her holding up a dainty two-way stretch complete with suspenders. He stopped the rehearsal, and there was a hurried discussion as to whether this was quite the thing. "I slipped out to the dressing-rooms, borrowed a pair of scissors and snipped off the suspenders," she recalls. "There were no complaints when we used the suspender-less belt in the live programme."

Her "children," as Felicity calls the small group of dancers she uses, were chosen by her after hundreds of auditions. "For television, dancers must have a graceful line, with no bumps anywhere. Above all, they must be disciplined. They have to follow the intricate chalk marks on the studio floor and still look as though they are floating on air."

Domini Callaghan, the star of the programme, says, "She has been through it all herself, so

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Fortune is a Woman

by ***WINSTON GRAHAM***

ILLUSTRATED BY GEORGE DITTON

I was past caring about the police. I would make Jerome talk if I had to beat the truth out of him

I WAS WAITING in a London hotel lounge to meet a blackmailer, a crooked solicitor named Jerome. Sarah, my wife, had had some of him already. An unknown "client" of his claimed to have proof that Tracey Moreton, Sarah's first husband, had committed arson and fraud to the tune of £28,000. The "client" demanded half the money to keep his mouth shut.

I'm Oliver Branwell. My firm of insurance adjusters, Abercrombies, had handled Tracey's business, and I knew that the charge was at least half true. Tracey had deliberately set fire to his house, Lowis Manor. I knew that, because I was in the house that night—a fact I had kept secret.

I'd been suspicious of Tracey for some time: I'd said as much, without mentioning his name, to Henry Dane, one of my oldest friends in the insurance world. And I'd gone down to Lowis to do some checking up, thinking that Tracey was away on holiday.

I'd found Tracey's dead body—amid all the standard preparations for fire raising. Realizing that part of the house was already ablaze, I went to investigate. To my horror, I fancied I heard

I could hear footsteps running, and a policeman's whistle. Jerome's breathing was horribly laboured. "My heart," he said, "my heart." I tried once again. "The name of the man," I said

Tracey's asthmatic breathing near me in the darkness: he was a martyr to the disease. Then the flames drove me out of the house.

Tracey had always been friendly to me, and I'd liked him well enough, though some of his friends in the art world—notably Clive Fisher, a pompous and pontifical connoisseur, and his sister Ambrosine—rather irritated me.

As for Sarah, I'd been in love with her for years. I asked her to marry me as soon as I decently could after Tracey's death.

If Tracey *was* dead. . . . I was beginning to lose my nerve. On our honeymoon, Sarah had had an appalling shock when an anonymous packet arrived containing Tracey's signet ring. The insurance world was gossiping that my car had been seen near the burning house. There had been a bad patch when I had suspected even Sarah of complicity in Tracey's fraud, but we were through that wood long ago. And now this little rat Jerome. . . .

A man in a dirty raincoat came across the hotel lounge to meet me. He answered Sarah's description of the solicitor pretty well. "Mr. Jerome?" I asked coldly.

"I'm afraid not, sir." He frowned. "My name's Barnes—Detective-Sergeant Barnes. Is there anywhere we could go for a little private chat?"

PART 5

Sergeant Barnes Checks Up

WHEN we met Sarah on the stairs and I introduced Barnes, I was afraid she would give something away. But although she was under a big strain she was too finely tempered for that. She smiled at him slightly and her eyes flickered away to mine and then looked across the hall.

"Is it something to do with your work, darling?"

"Yes. We'll be about ten minutes. I'll find you in the lounge?"

"I expect so. You won't *want* me, I suppose?"

I looked at Barnes and he smiled deprecatingly.

"No," I said. "I'll be down in a jiffy."

Of course, it could have been something to do with my work. In our room I shoved a chair forward. "Take your mac off if you're hot. What will you have to drink?"

"Thanks. Thank you; nothing on duty, you know." He sat down, looking rather apologetic. He wasn't any older than I was.

I offered the cigarette box. "So it's a duty call, is it? Well, what have I done—forgotten to take out a driving licence, or something?"

"Thank you. . . . No, nothing like that. As a matter of fact, it's nothing you've *done*, Mr. Branwell. It's really rather a matter of routine, you know; just checking up on a case. It's an old case; one that we've been keeping an eye on, just in the ordinary course of business, as you might say. One or two new facts have come along, and I'm going round picking up a pointer here and there." He got out his lighter before me and stood up to hold it to my cigarette. "We thought you might be able to help us."

"Well. Anything I can do. . . ."

Barnes drew on his cigarette and then looked round for an ash-tray. "It's that *fire*, you know. That fire at Lowis Manor, when Mr. Moreton lost his life. There are one or two things about it which we've always felt were ever so slightly unsatisfactory, and we wondered. . . . I believe you were a friend of the Moretons, knew them all pretty well. At least I suppose that's not too much to assume in view of the fact. . . ."

"In view of the fact that I married his widow."

He uncovered his teeth again. They were large and rather yellow. "I wasn't going to say that. . . . Oh, thanks." He tapped his cigarette in the ashtray I held out. "When did you meet Mr. Moreton first, Mr. Branwell?"

"It would be about two years ago. Two years this month. There was a small fire in his study at Lowis Manor. I was sent down by my firm to assess the loss."

"I see. And was that also the first time you'd met Mrs. Moreton?"

FOR a moment I hesitated, and knew the next moment that I was a damned fool to have done so.

"No. We met once before the war. Just for a few minutes. We'd completely forgotten each other."

"I suppose it was at a friend's house or something—before the war?"

"No. She had a puncture in her car. I happened to be passing and mended it for her."

He dug about in the pocket of his raincoat and took out a notebook. "Did you lose touch altogether—or write occasionally—or——"

"Lost touch. I forgot her existence. She forgot mine. She never knew my name. But I thought you'd come to ask me about the fire."

He grinned apologetically. "Sorry. It's the old flat-foot coming out in me. But it really leads up to how you became a friend of Mr. Moreton's, instead of just a—just someone calling in the way of business, as you might say. . . ."

"I don't think it had anything to do with it. Moreton had been in the desert war. So had I. We began to talk about it and he invited me to lunch."

Detective-Sergeant Barnes made a note. "Did he ever discuss the insurance of his house with you, Mr. Branwell?"

"No. Never." Then I remembered that excuse I'd made to McDonald, the broker. "Yes, he did. I believe once I suggested the place was under-insured for present-day prices."

"You knew what it was insured for, then?"

"Well, of course. It's always given on the underwriter's slip when a claim is made."

"Oh, of course. Naturally. When would be the last time you saw Mr. Moreton before he died?"

"About a week before. We had a long-standing date to go to the ballet together. In the end he couldn't make it and only his wife came. Afterwards, I drove her home and went in and had a drink with them."

"Did he seem—quite happy then?"

"Happy isn't the word to use. He was always off colour—asthmatic; and he had a bit of a grudge against the way things had turned out for him. If anything, that night, he was more cheerful and more talkative than usual."

"What did you talk about?"

"Chiefly about the repairs and decorations he was having done. Is this important?"

"Well, one likes to know; sometimes these little indications. . . . Tell me, Mr. Branwell, did you ever see him go off into a faint?"

"No, never."

"Or look like it?"

"No. Wouldn't his doctor be able to tell you about that?"

"Well, I'm just asking you to tell me about it, if you see what I mean."

"Frankly, I don't."

BARNES put down his pencil and picked up his cigarette. He drew at it a minute. He didn't seem discouraged. "You'll remember the night of the fire, I suppose, Mr. Branwell? May the sixth. Do you remember what you were doing that evening, whether you were in London or. . . ."

"I remember very well. I stood on a chair in my flat and slipped off it and sprained my ankle. I spent the next two days in bed."

"What time would it be when you had the accident?"

"Just about seven."

"You had a doctor, I suppose?"

Careful. "No. It didn't seem worth while. I was hobbling around by the Wednesday."

"So when was the first you heard of the fire?"

"My partner, Mr. Abercrombie, phoned me on Sunday morning and asked me to go down. I explained I couldn't; so he went instead."

"I suppose you—you phoned Mrs. Moreton, or got in touch with her somehow?"

"No."

He didn't speak, but waited with an inquiring look. "I felt there was very little I could do," I said. "Mr. Abercrombie was there to help in any way that was necessary."

"So when was the first time you communicated with Mrs. Moreton—after that?"

"I was at the inquest," I said. "Look, is this getting you anywhere?—because, frankly, it's

Mrs. Payne let out a piercing scream. I carried her, kicking, to the cloakroom and shoved her in

not amusing me. Can we cut it short and come to the point?"

He looked apologetic for the last time and rubbed out his cigarette. "I don't think I can come to any *point*, Mr. Branwell. You can't, you know, in these sort of jobs. It's a question of accumulating all the material you can and then laboriously sifting it through at headquarters. You probably know that, being a sort of detective—an insurance detective—yourself." He uncovered his teeth again. I didn't smile back. "But if it would assist you in any way I can tell you one of the circumstances which left us a little dissatisfied as to the manner of Mr. Moreton's death. You remember the medical evidence?"

"Very vaguely."

"The pathologist said that Moreton had only about one per cent of carbon monoxide in his blood. You remember? Well, that's no more than you would expect to find in a smoker—herbal *or* tobacco; it's the burning vegetable matter that counts. So that left nothing at all for any other smoke he might have inhaled. Now you remember Moreton is supposed to have telephoned the fire station, and the fire officer claimed they were on the scene within fifteen minutes—so that he could only have sent the message when the house was well ablaze. I expect you know where the telephone was?"

"I have a general idea."

"It was in a small cloakroom between the main kitchens and the baize door. There was only the one; no extensions. Well, we carefully worked it out. It seemed quite possible for Mr. Moreton to have stayed in one of the bedrooms and come out suddenly and jumped to his death. But it was impossible, we thought, for him to have telephoned from a room which must have been full of smoke, to have fought his way upstairs, and then to have died with no excess of carbon monoxide at all."

For a while, there was silence. "And what do you deduce from that?" I said at last.

"We think someone else may have been in the house and done the phoning, perhaps in order to confuse the issue or give the impression Moreton was alive a lot later than he really was."

I got up and strolled to the window. "You're assuming rather a lot. Fires are very capricious. I should hesitate to predict how one was going to burn or how one had burned."

"It's a little speculative, of course. But it does give room for dissatisfaction. That and other circumstances." He got up, too. "Well, thanks for your help, Mr. Branwell. I'll be getting along now. Are you staying here long?"

"No. We're moving into a flat on Saturday. I'll give you the address."

"I expect the hotel will have it if I need it, won't they?" At the door he stopped. "Oh, there was one other thing. What make of car have you got, Mr. Branwell?"

I said: "A Standard saloon. Why?"

"Not a new model?"

"Oh, dear, no. Just prewar."

"Go all right?"

"Yes. Fine."

He nodded and went out. I stood and watched him down the corridor. I gave him three minutes before I went to rejoin Sarah.

Mr. Jerome didn't turn up.

I was frightened now. I tried to reason it out, but reasoning didn't help much. The hunch that you're being followed and watched and overtaken, that something is pending, that a sort of circumstantial evidence exists and is being gathered up and made ready for use, that a number of people know more than you do and so you can't guard against any moves they may make—all these feelings get under your skin and under your good sense and make you jumpy.

The Collandi fur claim that I'd been working on hadn't got any further: it looked crooked to me. But Collandi's adjuster suddenly made a formal protest to the brokers that I was obstructing the claim unfairly. The broker was McDonald, and he passed the matter to his chief, Berkeley Reckitt. While I was out on another thing, Reckitt rang through and asked to speak to Michael, though he knew darned well that I was on the assignment. I went out to lunch feeling ruffled and edgy, and knowing I ought to call in and see McDonald some time during the afternoon. A broker's natural concern is for his client, and it was really up to me to go along and have a chat, explaining why I was holding things up. But I couldn't face the thought of seeing McDonald, whom I suspected of starting the gossip about me.

At lunch I met Charles Robinson the underwriter, and we carefully talked about nothing but cars and motor-racing. After lunch I went into the men's room with Charles and found McDonald there, wiping his hands on a towel.

His flabby face changed its shape when he saw me, and he just nodded frostily and went on using the towel. There was nobody else in the place except Charles. I thought now the opportunity was thrust at me I must take it; a third person present would make it easier.

I said: "I was coming to see you later on."

Maybe because I didn't feel friendly it didn't sound as friendly as I intended. He gave the towel an extra tug and carefully wiped between each finger. He stared at me and said: "What for?" and then before I could answer he turned back to the basin and picked up a comb and passed it once or twice through his hair.

"About Collandi. I really can't recommend a settlement yet. The whole claim is very unsatisfactory."

"Well, you've made your views perfectly plain in your report. I don't see what good will be served by coming to see me about it."

"I thought I could try to explain to you a bit more fully."

He looked at himself in the mirror. "What is there to explain? There's no doubt about the robbery, is there?"

The tone of his voice got me. "There's no doubt about the robbery. There's doubt as to what was stolen. I don't believe for a minute he ever had any kolinskies or sables."

"You think Collandi's a swindler?"

"I do."

"That's only your opinion, isn't it?"

"I'll change it when I see his invoices."

"Perhaps that won't be necessary."

It was plain enough what he meant. He was pressing Reckitt to have me withdrawn from the

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The team hatch out the gags. Dick Bentley, Joy Nichols and Jimmy study the script over the shoulders of writers Denis Norden (left) and Frank Muir

TAKE IT FROM ME (8) by JIMMY EDWARDS

Five pessimists hit the laughter jackpot

"There are no more pessimistic characters in show business than in my team," says Jimmy. Yet the show which began as a flop was to become the natural successor to the famous *Itma*. Here Jimmy Edwards tells how the laughter-makers go to work

OUR FIRST BROADCAST of *Take It From Here*, on March 23, 1948, was a dismal flop. Nevertheless, during the next six weeks there were some people who had faith in us. Chief among these, of course, was Charles Maxwell, our producer, who never ceased to believe that the show had possibilities. Frank Cantell and his entire Revue Orchestra were also staunch supporters. In spite of all their other commitments, they soon grew to call it "our show." Among the senior producers we had two champions in Harry S. Pepper and Ronnie Waldman, and when, after a few weeks, the show came up for review, they managed, in spite of all opposition, to secure a prolongation of the series.

While, even at that early stage, Charles had given his heart and soul to the show, I must confess that my own participation was on less idealistic terms. I was simply striving to remain in work. Fortunately, the show's scriptwriters, Frank Muir and Denis Norden, were as enthusiastic as our producer. Quick to see where the show appealed to listeners, they reshaped it from programme to programme.

But our listening figures remained unimpressive. Even after it had been running for twenty-nine weeks—a long time for a new show—the B.B.C. had no real confidence in its appeal. Without undue cynicism, I believe that the fact that Joy, Dick and I were low-salaried newcomers persuaded the B.B.C. to keep us on.

But although at the end of the first series no fame had attached itself to the show, yet, imperceptibly, my name must have been getting well known, for Jack Adams, my agent, was finding it easier to bill me in variety. I began to tour the country in my dilapidated Ford V8.

One day, Jack told me I had been offered a part in the pantomime at the Golders Green Hippodrome. "I think you ought to take the engagement," he said. "It's true the fee is mediocre, but it would be valuable experience for you." Jack is the first and last agent I have ever had, and I value his word. I like him because he doesn't shoot a big line the way some agents do, and never makes any promises he can't keep. He is a good critic and gives sound advice, which I usually take.

"All right," I said, and for seven hard-working weeks I became the Mayor of the Village in Prince Littler's production of *Mother Goose*. George Gee played the name part and Billy Danvers was Idle Jack.

Billy and I soon became friends. This genial and happy soul, who must have played in more pantomimes than he can remember, instantly took me under his wing. During the rehearsal period of ten days we used to slink away together for a pint or two at lunch time, and he would regale me with his reminiscences. More important, he willingly passed on to me much-needed advice on this very specialized branch of the profession. "Above all things," he kept insisting, "you must play your part with sincerity."

We had not been running long before I discovered the truth of this axiom. I realized that

however stupid and soppy the story might seem to me, yet, to the hundreds of children who came to the pantomime, we were all very real, vivid characters. What a good thing it was that Billy saw fit to mention this to me, because I could so easily have fallen into the trap of treating the whole thing as a waste of time and making inane remarks outside the script.

My determination to play the part to the best of my ability was stretched to the utmost in the "Magic Pool" scene. I had the stage to myself and used to wander on, euphonium in one hand, a tree stump in the other, stare round me and give vent to this brilliant piece of dialogue: "Why, this must be the Magic Pool. What a wonderful place to practise my euphonium!" Having thus cleverly bridged the gap from *Mother Goose* to my music hall act, I sat down and went into my routine.

Out Popped A "Snake"

I had gone to great pains to try to include an effect which would amuse the children. By an ingenious movement of a piece of string which was fixed to my finger, a snake began to emerge from the instrument every time I started to play. As soon as I stopped playing it popped back in. The children shrieked with dismay and fright. "What's the matter?" I used to ask, heavily planting the gag. "Did you see something?"

Tiny voices would squeak out: "Snake!"

"My word!" I would say to them. "Where?"

"In the trumpet," came the reply.

"Well, children, let me know if you see it again—just shout out 'Snake'."

The next time I pulled the string and the object emerged, there would be a thunderous yell of childish voices: "Snake!" Finally, I made the snake pop up and bite me on the side of the head. This was almost too much for them. They shrieked with terror as I threw it down into the pit with the wry remark; "Go down there among all the other snakes!"

George Gee and Billy Danvers soon discovered how easy it was to send me into fits of uncontrolled laughter on the stage. I would stand there, in full hunting regalia, slapping my boots with a large whip, and George, as Mother Goose, would look me up and down.

"Is this the Mayor?" George would say. "I thought it was a pillar box for a minute. Yes, he looks like a mayor"—sniff, sniff—"he smells like a mayor," and then, under his breath, George would mutter an unquotable aside and all my villainy would drain away in a gale of laughter.

By the time the pantomime's run had finished, *Take It From Here* was in the eighth week of its second series. The show had made a certain amount of progress, but it was still by no means a national success. Denis and Frank had changed the formula slightly, and Wallas Eaton had joined the cast with his plaintive call of: "Come 'ome, Jim Edwards!" Wallas worked into the show very well. What we needed was someone who could do dialects, and he was particularly versatile at this.

Death Of Tommy Handley

For some time now we had been ending the show with a satirical take-off of a film or play, and the boys found it a wonderful vehicle for slick comedy. The show was now a very good one, but the public had not yet caught on to it.

It was January, 1949. On the ninth, we were rehearsing in the Paris Cinema for the current week's show when Denis Norden brought us the incredible news of Tommy Handley's sudden death. Like many others there at the time, I had seen the great Tommy in the B.B.C. canteen once or twice, yet I had never met him. But he was the top rung in the ladder, loved and famous and the personification of kindly good humour. It was hard to believe that Tommy Handley and *Itma* just weren't there any more.

If the news of Tommy Handley's death had

Producer Charles Maxwell is presented with the National Radio Award for 1949. After a poor start, the team did not expect to win

thrown a pall of gloom over the *Take It From Here* team, it stunned the B.B.C. planners. *Itma*, long the Corporation's top comedy show, had been given three repeats. How could these gaps be filled quickly? Into one of these vacant half-hours, a Saturday lunchtime spot, *Take It From Here* was thrown. Fortunately for us, our show that week was a particularly good one. Habitual *Itma* listeners, tuning in as usual, listened to us instead and, soon after, we began to hear good reports of our show for the first time.

The radio critics began to cast around in their columns for *Itma's* successor. Some were kind enough to suggest that our show was a leading candidate. Our listening figures began to creep up. The facts of life are sometimes cruel, and *Itma's* great tragedy proved *Take It From Here's* great gain. Gradually, our show caught on, and more and more people seemed to be repeating our catch-phrases.

How The Show Is Written

I don't suppose many listeners realize just how a show like this is put together, or, indeed, that each half-hour programme takes a full week to write. As a matter of fact, Frank Muir and Denis Norden, those wonderfully talented scriptwriters, begin work on each show ten days before the broadcast.

It is hard to believe that this job of writing can be done almost exclusively in office hours, but that is the way the boys have gradually got themselves organized and it is the routine to which they have grown accustomed. They sit down, facing one another dourly across their back-to-back desks in their cupboard-sized Mayfair office, and pound away at the script through the morning and afternoon, either stopping for a brief lunch or having sandwiches sent up. Only if they are getting behindhand with their schedule do they carry on the work together at night.

When this happens, great mountains of cigarette ends build up in the ashtrays, the air becomes foul, they pace backwards and forwards, writing and rewriting. If a gag eludes them during the daytime, they go out into the streets and take a slow stroll round the block in the hope of having something battered into their heads by the roar of the traffic.

They begin, not at the beginning, but at the end of the programme. Then they work backwards until they finish the opening exchange of dialogue between Joy, Dick and myself. This may seem to be a topsy-turvy method of working, but the boys have their reasons for operating in this way. For one thing, it enables them to bring last-minute bits of topicality into our early chit-chat—like the birth of Joy's baby, Dick's birthday or the time I appeared at Bow Street for a parking offence.

The programme is divided, of course, into three spots. These are, in the order of writing, the film burlesque; then a satirical skit on some current event or news item; and the first spot, which presents Joy, Dick and me, ostensibly as ourselves, in a gag routine built around something that has really happened to one of us.

Denis and Frank use the telephone a great deal when they are preparing the script, and keep in touch with producer Charles Maxwell to iron out knotty problems and discuss new ideas. They also have several script discussions with him during the week, visiting him as each of the show's three spots is finished.

Laughs At His Own Jokes

At these sessions, Frank and Denis, each well over six feet tall, tower over the diminutive Charles as he listens to their latest offering. Denis reads, trying to render each part in character, while Frank, listening, chuckles and laughs at every gag as if he's never heard it before. It is one of his characteristics that he always laughs at each joke every time it is read over. He laughs when he thinks of it, he laughs when he writes it, he laughs as Denis reads it to Charles, he laughs when we read it over at rehearsals, and during the performance he laughs yet more heartily, even if the audience does not join in with him.

The only time he does not laugh is when we make a mistake or read a line wrongly. Then a great wince of pain crosses his face and he looks balefully up at us from the front row of the audience as if to say: "What couldn't that joke have been with a better comedian?"

During the reading, Charles Maxwell rarely abandons a grave, brooding—almost forbidding—front. "It's depressing to have him take our best gags like that," Frank told me once, "but I expect I ought to be used to it by now." On the other hand, if he laughs too much they reckon it is a bad sign.

As the producer, Charles organizes the administrative details of the show. It is he who arranges such things as studio bookings, accommodation, orchestration and effects. He also acts as an intermediary between us and the Corporation itself, and has to handle any crisis that may arise. For instance, the B.B.C. might suddenly decide they would rather do the show "live" on Tuesdays, owing to complications in studio accommodation. Charles has to get on to all of us and try to work it out to everybody's satisfaction.

Producer Is Usually Right

It is also his constant duty to galvanize the scriptwriters into laying the goods before him early enough in the week for him to have it duplicated and prepared for the broadcast. Charles has always been a stern master, and the boys will admit that several times he has infuriated them by throwing a sequence back at them for rewriting. They will also admit that he has usually been right.

During the week, Dick and I rarely have anything to do with the shaping of the show, but Joy calls in at the studio, usually on a Tuesday, to fix her song of the week and go over it with Peter Akister, the arranger.

Finally, after working restlessly every day, Frank and Denis finish the script to their own

Continued on page 31

With a blinding flash, the charge exploded. Stella flinched back into his arms with a snarl as the shattered rock was hurled up towards them

THUNDER ON THE MOUNTAIN

by F. W. HOLIDAY

He had never touched explosives before—his father would flay him alive. But he couldn't bear the whining of the trapped puppy. He lit the fuse

YOUNG DILWEN THOMAS, dark eyed, twelve years old, stood stock still and listened hard to the thin sounds floating down from the dark firwood. Only two things can make that sort of noise, he thought. It might be a ginned rabbit screaming for release. Or it might be . . . it might, almost, be anything. What could it be? Something in pain and fear, to be sure.

Now, with his brown-corduroyed knees bracing his young body against the drop of the hillside, he listened again. Like the wind whistling thinly over the lip of the mountain or the squeal of a lone violin in an orchestra, the sounds came once more. He bit his lip, dark young face upturned. It was a steep climb; and it was a big dark wood. After all, if it was a rabbit, it didn't matter much. He saw rabbits in a pile on the station every day and every one had died in a gin. It was nothing to fuss over. And yet. . . .

"Dilwen!" his mother shrieked; and down below at the cottage, he saw her plump arms waving a violent signal. Reluctantly, he descended.

"You're to go now and take this message to Shop Williams," his mother said. "Tell them to leave four loaves today—I forgot to put it in the note. And on the way back call at William Thomas's and bring back a gallon of paraffin. And don't spill it."

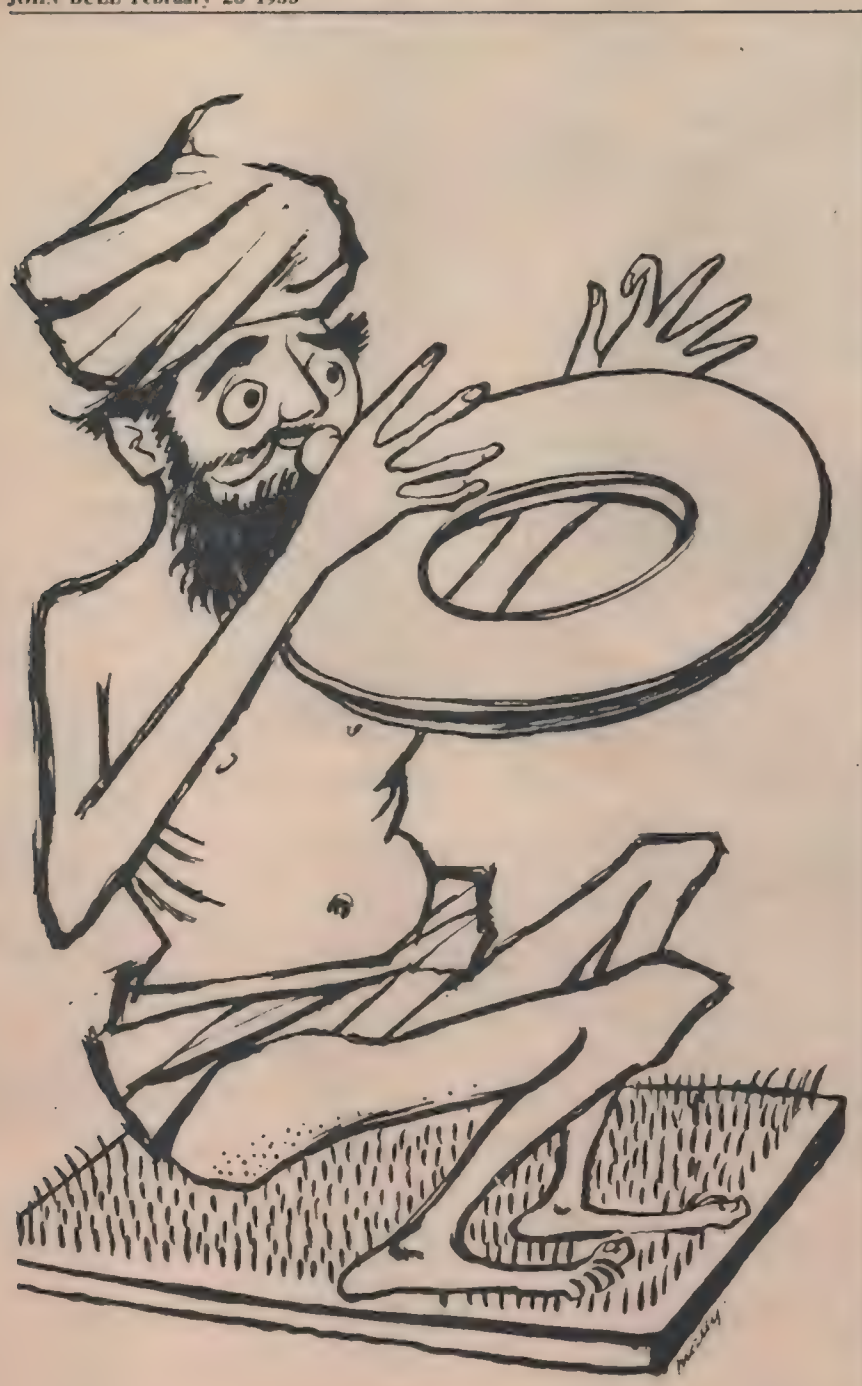
He went at once, but a bit grudgingly, his boy's slim form trailing away down the hill away from the farm. What could it be that was shouting out in the wood, he was thinking. He didn't like the wood. Old people said it was haunted. That was piffle. All the same, it wasn't nice, not even in daytime.

He left the message, collected the paraffin, and began the two-mile drag back to the farm. He had heard rabbits squeal and, somehow, that noise sounded like a rabbit he had heard before. It was familiar, and yet. . . .

He stopped and put the can on the rocky ground. Heather crested the banks around him in violent clumps. And then he remembered. With sudden rushing memory, he knew what made noises like that because he'd heard them often before, but softer and better-fed, and sleepy, usually. Puppies!

Puppies! Puppies in the firwood! And at once everything was obvious. Stella, the rough-maned collie, had run off and had pups. She had been gone for three days now. So that was it! It was nothing to do with ghosts or any of

ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES WOOD



fill up and

feel

the difference

SHELL

that sort of rot. Delighted with his conclusions, he snatched up the can and trotted up the rough road.

But well-fed pups don't squeal, he thought; not so bad as that. They have to be very hungry to squeal like that. Starving even. But why should they starve—Stella would never let them; she was a good mother.

Puzzled, worried now, he came panting into the yard. A clatter of pans suggested that his mother was busy in the kitchen. He turned away and headed for the darkness of the high firs which stooped over the farm like a black mantle rolled back against the clouds.

Under the trees it was darker than he expected and his boots were muffled to silence by the pad of dead needles. He stopped, listening, and spots of sweat formed on his brow. It was a hard climb and the unexpected gloom started a feeling of nervousness. Down on the wind he heard it again, a pitiful little trail of phantom echoes pouring from a lonely baby throat. Oh, the poor little devils, he thought; and his heart gave a bump of sympathy. Careless now of bramble and low branch, he plunged up the slope and across towards Druid Rocks.

Druid Rocks came down from the mountain in a great glissade of black fangs and scattered boulders. In summer, climbers came from the town and hauled each other over the rock-faces on ropes. In winter, foxes scuttled down the ravines and sheep had been known to fall broken-legged to death. It was a weird place, fringed about by firs, and exposed to the blast of autumn sou'westers.

Carefully, Dilwen skirted the last of the firs and climbed a mound of stones the size of footballs and then, higher up, a slope of crumbling scree. With a thrill he realized that evening was on its way; he would have to hurry.

STELLA, the collie, was lying at the edge of the wide stone promontory and at first Dilwen didn't see her. As the stones moved under his hands and feet, she came at him with a scream of wild delight and hysteria. She sprang at his face, tongue licking, and then dropped whimpering at his feet.

"Poor girl," he murmured. "Poor old girl." He caressed the thick black and white mane which ruffed her neck like a collar. Out of the corner of his eye, he saw two fat pups creep from cover and crawl whining towards their mother.

Only two pups—then where are the others, thought Dilwen. They wobbled up on unsure legs and began to suck eagerly. But Stella wrenched herself free and in four bounds had flung herself down on the edge of the promontory. Going closer, Dilwen saw that the rocky outpost was split. A crack four or five inches wide ran back from the face for a dozen feet. And out of this crack, faintly now, came the shrill little cries that had brought him here.

On his belly, he peered down into the twilit cavity. It was very deep and much choked with whinberries and ivy. But somewhere down there was the rest of Stella's litter—he didn't know how many—and the knowledge made his young heart chill inside him. Nothing but a monkey could get down that crevasse—or a puppy unwitting enough to totter over the edge.

IN fierce unthinking anger, he turned towards Stella. Why had she been so silly as to have her puppies near such a death-trap? The stupid beast! But, when he saw her, his heart melted into instant sympathy; she crouched so pitifully on the rock, ears pricked at the tiny squalling from below, that tears almost came to his eyes. Fighting down the lump in his throat, he looked away quickly.

By scraping his knees on the rock and digging his fingers between the roots of straggling furze bushes, Dilwen managed to get over the face of the promontory. Down below, it shelved away into flat rock and he was able to stand up. Overhead, with pointed nose and hopeful eye, Stella watched him.

Dilwen bent forward, exploring with deft hands. The cleft was certainly wider down here. In a moment he had wedged himself into the narrow opening, clawing with slim fingers, kicking hard against the rock. He went in for two feet and then stuck fast; at once he had to bite his lip to keep from yelling out in terror. After a mad struggle, his shirt torn, his hands cut on the rocks, he fought his way out. For a while he lay panting at the mouth of the crevasse.

The pup or puppies—he still wasn't sure how many—were lodged at the very back of the cavity. A dozen notions flashed through his mind—of using fishing rods and nooses, or even a pair of blacksmith's pincers on two poles. But they were useless. The crevasse bent like a fish-hook.

He got up, and in his desperation took a few paces out and along the rock. Almost at once his eye fell on a wide cleft that ran into a stratum of the cliff-face and led slant-wise, at a steep angle, into the back of the cleft where the puppies were imprisoned.

It would have been easy to get down this new cleft—it was at least a yard wide—but for one insuperable obstacle. As though mocking him, a boulder was implanted at its mouth, sealing the rock to within a few inches. I've got to move it, he thought; got to, got to. Madly, he thrust his shoulder against it; he dug his heels in; after a moment he ran and brought a thick baton of wood and worked it like a lever. But the boulder never even trembled. It must have weighed over a ton.

I'm not blubbing, he thought, disjointedly; not now. I've got to move

COMMANDO!

Exploits of the war's most daring soldiers . . . by the man who led them

THE War Office letter—dispatched shortly after Dunkirk—called for volunteers to raid the enemy coast. "Men of good physique . . . initiative and leadership . . . able to swim and navigate boats," it read.

For John Durnford Slater, a man of action, it had an immediate appeal. Within a month of volunteering, he was leading the first Commando raid of the war.

Next week, JOHN BULL begins *Commando!*—the exciting personal chronicle of Brigadier Durnford Slater, D.S.O., the first Commando.

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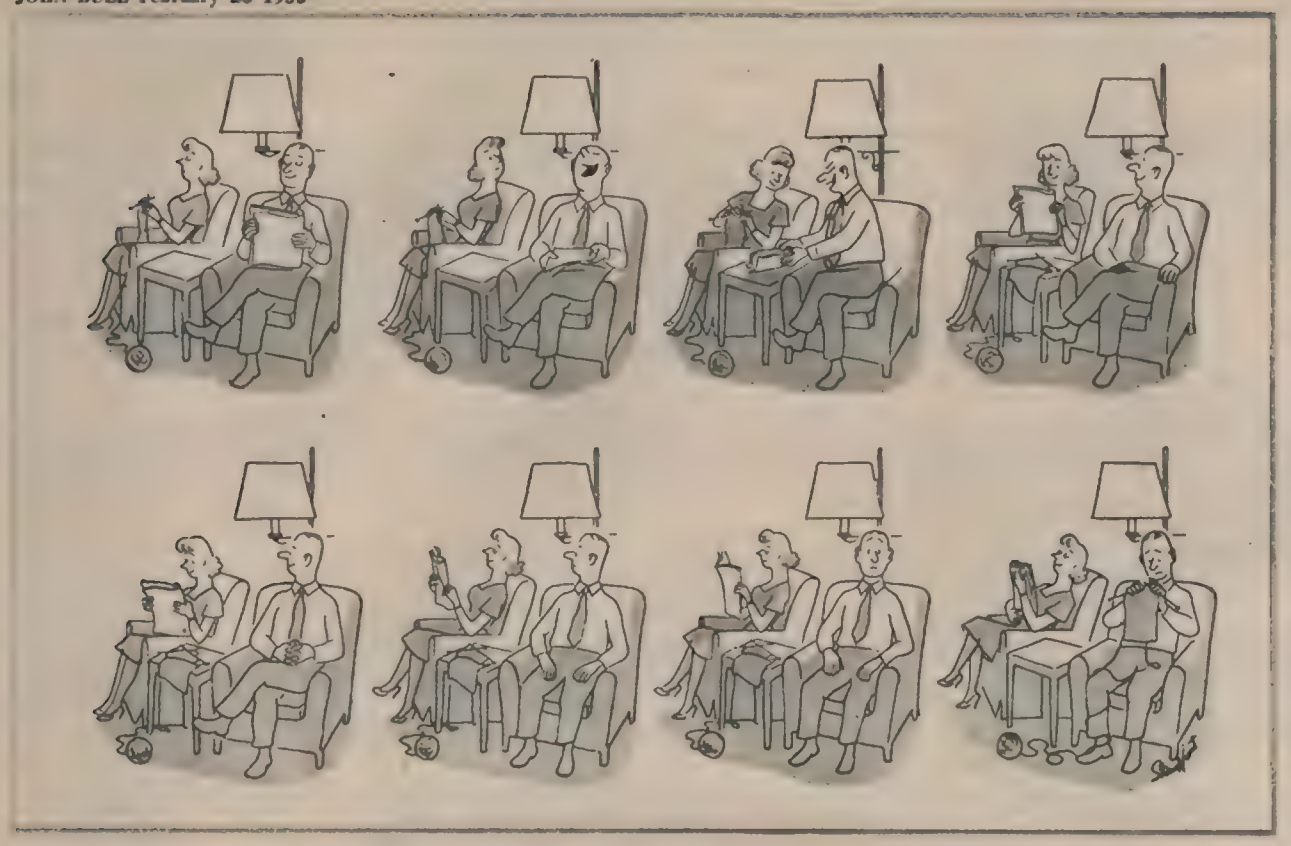
Illustrated by authentic paintings by Fred Laurent—himself a Commando—and by the author's own photographs, the first exciting instalment of *Commando!* will appear . . .

IN JOHN BULL NEXT WEEK



it. Poor Stella! The puppies will die and never see the farm, and we'll never know what colour they were or anything.

After a moment, with a sort of wild fury, he ran at the rock wall and clawed his way to the top. Stella crouched, quivering, watching him. Not heeding her, he started to run. Blindly, stumbling, he crashed his way over the stones of Druid Rocks and plunged into the firs on frantic legs. In half an hour it would be dark and the pups would never live to see another day. He knew they wouldn't.

When he reached the farm, he looked around cautiously. The light was failing and the mooing of cows showed that milking was done. A light blinked yellow and he knew his mother was lighting the lamps and preparing supper. By now his father would be drinking his first pint down at the Quarries Inn. The coast was clear.

Stealthily, he turned the corner of the cart-shed and slipped within. High on the wall of the shed was a box, a heavy padlocked box. He felt for it and then ran his hand down the corrugated iron at the back. His fingers found the key where he had left it, months before, when he had first discovered it while fooling around in the shed. His father never used the big box now—not since he'd left the quarry and taken over the little farm. Dilwen had never dared to open the box; but he knew what was inside. It had been thrilling knowledge for a boy.

Now, that knowledge was important, vital. He fitted the key and turned it. The lid opened with a groan. How many should he take? Three? Four? No, no! That would kill the pups. These were terribly powerful. He took two of the blasting cartridges, and felt the greasy, cylindrical shape of them to make sure they were the right things. With his penknife he cut a length off the drum of fuse cable where it lay coiled in a waterproof packet under the box-lid. He put them all carefully in his jacket pocket and, just in time, remembered the matches. There was always a box on the window-sill of the cow-shed, in case of a night calving. He got them, then he turned and ran for the wood.

Stella heard him when he was still panting up the heap of stones. Excited, sensing his haste, she rushed on ahead and he stumbled after her through the gloom. In a moment he was over the cliff, almost falling in his haste, his hands feeling round the bottom of the boulder for a cavity.

You have to have a cavity, he thought. The explosive needs something to push against. He had often heard his dad talking about it when he was at the quarry. In the quarry they drilled holes for the shots; here, he would have to find a natural one.

He found a hole, a deep hollow where the rains had washed the soil away. He put the cartridges in and pushed the fuse down as far as it would go. For good measure he found some paper in his pocket and pushed it in as well. Then he cut the fuse, allowing three feet of it, and stood back, shaking.

Now the matches. He got one ready. All he had to do was light the fuse, climb the rock and get under cover. And don't forget Stella and the other pups, he thought; take them, too.

When he lit the fuse, it began to glow with a bright orange glow that was pretty to see. He got up the rock face quickly, found the two puppies, tucked one under each arm, and made for the trees.

At first Stella followed, obedient to his word; and then she slanted a look over her shoulder and began to slide back. Dilwen's heart stood still as he called her. The dog hesitated, listening and sniffing, and she came to him slowly. To make quite sure, he locked her in his arms, puppies and all, and waited.

All of this was the worst thing he had ever done. If his dad found it out he would flay him alive. Dilwen knew he would never be able to explain it properly, make them see he had done the only thing he could. But perhaps no one would ever know. Perhaps. . . .

When the charge fired, Stella flinched back in his arms with a snarl. The blast came like thunder; the rocks shuddered and pebbles scattered around him like giant hail. The red flash, intense and blinding, left behind a smoke reeking of chemicals.

When he reached the cleft, he found the boulder still intact but smashed and crushed against the cliff. And now there was an easy opening. In the rock the fumes were choking but he went in regardless. Blindly he felt his way, his fingers scratched by jagged rock and furze prickles, until he touched a warm something, curled up in the angle of the wall. To make quite sure he explored every inch, but there was only one pup. And, to reassure his dread, it stirred and began to cry faintly.

WHEN Stella and the three puppies were safe in the cart-shed, Dilwen went in to supper.

"You're late," his mother reminded him sharply. His father had already returned from the inn and was eating his supper with relish.

"Stella had pups," Dilwen said as he washed his hands.

"Oh?" said his father, reading a newspaper.

"We'll have to give them away," his mother said.

"I'd like to keep one, please," said Dilwen awkwardly. As no one spoke he went on: "Only one. A lovely one. I want to call it Thunder. Oh, can I?"

"We'll see," his mother said. "Now eat your supper and off to bed. And I hope they don't keep up that blasting every evening as late as this. It wakes the baby."

"Blasting?" her husband said with sudden interest. "At this time of night? Nonsense! It was thunder, woman."

With expressionless face, Dilwen ate his supper. THE END

FELICITY GRAY PUTS TV ON ITS TOES

Continued from page 15

she knows our worries." Felicity's own worry is her height. "I am five feet eight, and the average ballet dancer is four inches shorter. Even my lucky breaks—such as the Vic Wells Ballet season in Copenhagen in 1936—were spoilt for me because I *always* seemed to end a dance next to some mite."

But in 1938 she was brought in at half a day's notice to take over the complete repertoire of the *prima ballerina* of the Lydia Kyasht company at the Vaudeville Theatre. She had just returned from a musical comedy tour. Automatically, just before the performance of *Les Sylphides*, she put on her musical comedy make-up. When she floated on to the moonlit stage her face glowed puce among her white-faced corps de ballet. "But at least my make-up hid my blushes. I realized what I had done from the titter that went round the audience, and dived for my powder puff at the first exit."

Her first TV appearance was in *Waiting For Itma*. She gave herself the most difficult and constricted rôle—that of a weather vane. For nearly two minutes she had to kneel on a revolving wooden stool. Her husband, Willoughby Gray, a B.B.C. actor, says: "At home she had practised for weeks, often for an hour at a time, kneeling on our revolving piano stool and waving her arms about."

Television cameramen find Felicity one of the most difficult TV personalities to photograph. "The trouble is her eyes. They are so deep-set," says Raymond McCullough, a lighting engineer. "She has normal eyebrows, but beneath them is a deep crease which forms a dark shadow."

Explaining ballet to viewers means weeks of preparation, followed by ten rehearsals. Apart from overheads, the programmes cost £600 to produce. A large share of this goes to the orchestra, which never numbers less than thirty. Felicity herself earns about £60 a show. For two complete series, she persuaded Cecil McGivern to put the dancers under contract at £8 a week for six-monthly periods. To make the jobs worthwhile to the dancers, she arranged for them to appear in other musical shows as well. "It certainly paid, artistically and economically," admits McGivern. "Felicity is a girl who knows what she wants and is determined to get it. I admire her drive."

Members of the Royal Family are among her admirers. At the Covent Garden Gala performance given in honour of the French President, the late King was overheard saying: "All my family enjoys that lovely little programme, *Ballet For Beginners*."

Strangers often recognize her on London buses and trains. Recently she was buying a newspaper in Tottenham Court Road. The newsvendor suddenly leapt in the air, landed with his feet together and asked: "How's this for the fifth position?"

Born in Southampton, the fourth and youngest daughter of a Unitarian clergyman, Felicity Andreae nagged her father for a year before getting her chance at Phyllis Bedells's Ballet School. "She was so enthusiastic," recalls a classmate, "that she never noticed what anyone else was doing. We were always having to jump clear of her highkicks to avoid being kicked in the eyes."

Dance For Clark Gable

Last summer she was rung up unexpectedly by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer and asked to teach Gene Tierney, the film star, to dance for her part as ballerina in a film called *Never Let Me Go*. After one week of teaching on location in Cornwall, she was asked to double for Gene Tierney in a long-distance shot of a honeymoon bathing scene with Clark Gable.

Hurriedly she worked out some steps with which to run joyously out of the sea. She rehearsed half a dozen times on the sand before the cameras. Delmer Davies, the director, was delighted. "We'll shoot in half an hour," he told her.

"But it was just my luck," says Felicity. "As I was running up the sand to change into a glamorous bikini, I got cramp in my left calf muscle. With fifteen minutes to go I managed to teach Gene herself the steps—demonstrating to her on one leg—and she put up a very good show. A soft surface like sand is fatal to a ballet dancer's muscles, as I ought to have realized."

Her moments of relaxation come usually at weekends, which she likes to spend with her husband and their three Yorkshire terriers and Siamese cat at Bloors Place—a fifteenth-century fortified manor house they bought two years ago in the village of Lower Rainham, Kent.

"It's a lovely place—but draughty," she says. "Some viewers write to congratulate me on what they call my musical voice. In fact, it is usually hoarse. I am a chronic sufferer from colds and laryngitis, and hoarseness often comes from that."

Before one programme she arrived at the studio almost voiceless. She insisted, however, that she could carry on with the aid of a mysterious bottle in her handbag. Just before the red light went on, she took a swig of a thick brown liquid. Every time the cameras "cut" away from her, she had another drink.

After the fourth time the studio technicians crossed their fingers. When the programme was over she told them the recipe: brown sugar, lemon, glycerine—and water. THE END

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THE PROTEIN NERVE TONIC

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AMANDA WANTS ROMANCE

Continued from page 12

by covering it up with the coral sand of George's private beach.

"Amanda," George said sternly, "You said that I was the oldest man you'd ever kissed."

"I remember," Amanda said gravely and waited, and with a mighty surge of uncontrollable desire George reached for her and gathered her into his arms, and Amanda's small, slim hands went to the back of his head again and her soft mouth came up and George's control of the situation exploded.

"It's—impossible!" she told him shakily a few minutes later. "You're—you're thirty-four years old!"

"I am," George answered grimly. "What's impossible about that?"

"Oh, I didn't mean that," Amanda said in a small voice. "I mean it's impossible—but I think I love you, George."

"Oh," George said, and forbore to examine the preposterous leap of emotion within him.

"George—it is impossible, you know. It's—you've just turned my head, that's all. I'll be all right if I can just stay away from you a few days."

"Will you?" George asked fearfully, while his heart plummeted from ecstasy to despair. "I mean, can you?"

Amanda shook her head mutely, and George's heart took a couple of little exuberant skips. "No," she said thoughtfully. "No, I don't think I could stay away from you. I don't think I possibly could. But I've got to get over you, George, because it's impossible. Daddy would—would——"

She shuddered and wriggled closer to George, who put one protective arm around her and bravely inquired: "What would — what would your father do?"

"Put yourself in his place," Amanda suggested.

OBEDIENTLY, George put himself in Daddy's place, and what he saw appalled him: a middle-aged wolf—up to yesterday George had regarded himself as a bounding, youthful prodigy, but now the weight of his years lay heavy upon him—up to no good with the loveliest, most sheltered and innocent child in all the world.

"Agh-h-h," George groaned in tones of abysmal despair.

"We'll just have to be very careful, George," Amanda said brightly, thoughtfully, "and let time tell. It will probably wear off soon anyway, this infatuation; it won't be anything more than that. And in the meantime you'll just have to pretend you're coming mostly to see Mum and Daddy, and maybe we can sneak off together occasionally, somehow. You mustn't ever appear to be interested in me."

It had been that way for a whole week now, culminating in the tea party yesterday to which George had treacherously not invited any young men for Amanda.

Long evenings with the entire Craig family would have been most pleasant if he had not so coveted the few brief moments at the end when the senior Craigs would go off to bed; the few moments, so ineffably sweet, of kissing and murmuring in the scented darkness, and being reassured that it hadn't worn off for Amanda, not yet.

And, of course, he hated himself, all the time he was with Albert and Helen Craig, for his own black treachery. And now, he knew, he simply could not go on with it.

RESOLUTELY, George squared his shoulders and closed his eyes momentarily, and his lips moved prayerfully as he wondered whether Albert Craig would use a pistol or a shotgun on him, and then he dived into the water and swam for the mouth of the grotto.

"My, don't you look nice, Mistuh Bolt!" Frances cried with delight half an hour later as he emerged from the cottage, spick and span and very correct. "Wheah you goin', Mistuh Bolt?"

"Out," George said flatly, in a tone calculated to discourage further inquiry. "And I won't be home for dinner."

"Goin' to propose, I bet you!" Frances said shrewdly, and giggled. "'Minds me of my uncle. He got five sons. All boys. An'——"

He gained the seat of his bicycle with one spasmodic leap, and roared away into the distance, jaw set resolutely, a man of purpose.

He found Albert Craig in the bar at Coral Beach, and providentially alone. He squared his shoulders.

"Albert," George began peremptorily and without preamble, scowling ferociously, and then amended that to a more formal: "Mr. Craig! In spite of the disparity in age and—in age, I am in love with your daughter."

"Yes, George?" Albert Craig said mildly. "Sit down, won't you, and have a drink? I rather imagined you were, you know. You've certainly been beating your brains out pursuing her all week. So?"

George's jaw dropped ludicrously and then he closed his mouth firmly and narrowed his eyes. He thought he could use the mailed fist in the velvet glove, did he? Probably send her abroad for the summer in the hope this would all blow over, or something. Well, let him know right now how much good that would do!

"So I'm going to marry her, that's what!" George shouted, waving a glass that had somehow got into his hand without his being aware of it, and setting his jaw menacingly. "And there's nothing in the world that can stop me, d'you hear? Nothing, and nobody!"

"Well, that's fine, George," Albert Craig said placatingly. "I wish you luck. It will be nice to have a playwright in the family. Ah—do you think you might lower your voice just a little, George?"

He was, incredibly, extending his hand, and mechanically George took it and shook it and let it go.

"Amanda," George said suspiciously, eyeing Albert Craig with a chill and wary eye, "Amanda has led me to believe that you would never give your consent, sir. The discrepancy in our

"Mind that pedestrian—watch this corner—follow that car——"

DOWN YOUR GARDEN

with RICHARD DIMBLEBY

Yard by yard sowing

To ensure the even sowing of grass seed, I take a piece of stiff wire, two yards long, and bend it at right angles in the centre. I put it at one corner of the prepared lawn surface, to form a square with the two outside edges. When that square yard is sown, I move the right angle to form another square with the outer edge of the lawn and the line of grass seed already sown.—G. D. T. LANE, Abergavenny, Mon.

Mothballs on guard

Neighbours were amused when they saw my bed of greens, for each plant had a mothball nestling against the stem. But when my plants went on growing, while theirs were ruined by cabbage-root fly, they began to follow my method.—W. C. KEMP, Brierley Hill, Staffs.

Daffodil control

Every year, while the daffodils are still in bloom, I get an old cycle inner tube and cut it into thin bands. Then, when the daffodils are finished and the leaves wilt, I keep the border neat and tidy by doubling down the leaves and slipping over them one of my home-made elastic bands.—ALEX. S. CRICHTON, Aberdeen.

Readers are invited to send their own simple, original gardening hints to DOWN YOUR GARDEN, John Bull, 189 High Holborn, London, W.C.1. Every week, Richard Dimbleby will make a selection of the best, and John Bull will pay three guineas for each on publication. "Down Your Garden" hints cannot be returned unless they are accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

ages, for one thing. But I want you to know that, consent or no consent, I am going to marry Amanda!"

"Ah-hum," Albert Craig said, and raised an eyebrow quizzically. "Sit down, George. You're in worse trouble than you think. Now—when did you get the idea that you were too old for Amanda?"

"Why—why, I had it all along, I suppose," George answered, bewildered, sitting gingerly on the edge of the proffered chair. "I mean it. I mean, I'm fourteen years and two months older than Amanda, and——"

"She's fourteen years and two months younger than you, too," Albert Craig said cryptically; "but you never thought of that, did you, George? You haven't been thinking she's too young for you; you've been thinking you're too old for her. And that Helen and I would oppose you; which we don't, by the way. Now, who put you on the defensive, George—as though I didn't know?"

A great white light burst in George Bolt's brain, and he rose, stricken, and Albert Craig demanded: "Where do you think you're going?"

"I am going to find Amanda," George said between his teeth, "and when I do I am going to settle accounts for the agonies she's made me suffer this past week! Threatening to—to get over it. She is in love with me, isn't she, Albert?"

"Head over heels," Albert Craig assured him.

"Making me sneak around like a—like a——" George went on dazedly.

"Like a romantic suitor," Albert Craig finished, and commanded: "Sit down, George! I know the women in my family. I've survived twenty-five years with Helen and darn near twenty with Amanda, and I can tell you right now if Amanda wants romance, you'd better give her romance, or you're going to lose Amanda!"

Cowed, George sat down, watching his future father-in-law—he hoped—with the fascination of bird for snake, while Albert Craig chuckled fiendishly and said: "If she wants you to think you're wooing her over parental opposition, that's what you'd better make her think you think. And don't think she won't make it tough for you. Clandestine meetings in the park, and friends smuggling notes, and swapping dates at night clubs."

GEORGE shuddered, but he knew that Albert Craig was his only chance. Resignedly, he bent his head and braced himself, and listened.

"Your best chance, if you want to get this over with," Albert Craig said thoughtfully, and George pricked up his ears eagerly, "is to talk her into eloping. But it's got to be good, it's got to show real imagination. Now"—he had produced a small notebook and a pencil, and George watched curiously as he began to sketch a diagram on the page—"now, this may take many months, you understand, but. . . . Here's where we live. Block of flats, fifth floor, here, and Amanda's bedroom is the fifth window from the corner of the building."

Oh, sanity, sanity, George Bolt cried silently, where is my sanity?

"Now, this is the part she'll go for," Albert Craig said gleefully. "You get a fire-engine with an extension ladder, you see, and she'll never be able to resist the idea of being stolen from a fifth-floor flat in the middle of the night by a romantic swain with a fire-engine. I can help you with the fire-engine, by the way. I happen to know the commissioner."

It would go on all his life, George knew; there would never be an end to the courtship of Amanda. And suddenly his eyes lighted up with a maniacal enthusiasm, and as he reached for the pencil in Albert Craig's hand, George said, with great dignity: "I'll get my own fire-engine, thank you. Now, look; how's this?" THE END

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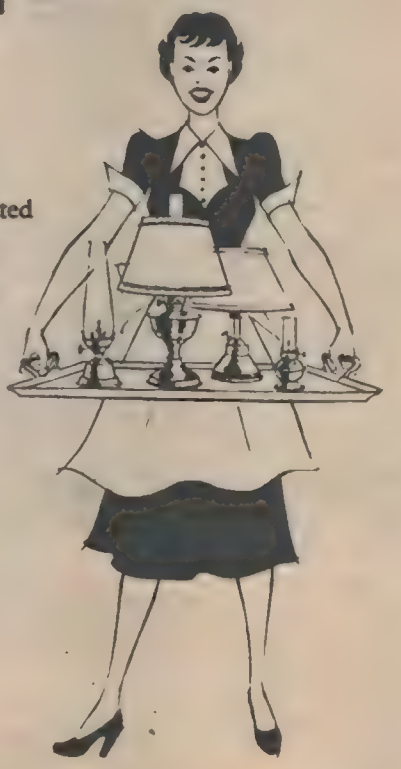

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FORTUNE IS A WOMAN

Continued from page 18

case. From the first words the meeting had gone downhill. Charles came across.

"Hallo, what's the matter with you two?"

McDonald put down the comb. "Branwell's suffering from excess of zeal. Success must have gone to his head."

I said: "What the hell d'you mean by that?"

I heard two other men come into the place talking. Charles put a hand on my arm. "Gently, brothers, gently."

McDonald said: "I should have thought the answer obvious."

"I'd like to hear it."

"Well. . . . I meant the success you've had in marrying money."

I hit him. I'd really lost my temper and put more weight behind it than I thought. He cannoned into one of the men who had just come in, took a couple more steps and then sat down on the floor, holding his jaw.

"You damned fool," said Charles, grabbing my arm again.

I knew Marshall and Ainslie slightly. Marshall went over and helped McDonald to sit up. Ainslie, who had nearly had his spectacles knocked off, jerked them back and made some protest.

I shook off Charles's arm and went over to McDonald. Marshall straightened up excitedly to fend me off, but I only wanted to help McDonald to his feet.

He wouldn't take my hand but went on dabbing at his mouth, which was trying to bleed. The other three seemed all to be talking at once.

McDonald said: "This all fits in with the rest. It's what I might have expected."

"It's what you asked for," I said. "Only I'm sorry because you're an older man."

McDonald rolled over on his knees and got up. His mouth was puffing out but he was all right. He got his handkerchief out and then began struggling into his coat. Marshall went to help him.

Ainslie said: "Well, I've heard of some peculiar places for a free fight. . . ."

I turned then and went out, Charles Robinson following. I suppose I must have looked white or a bit peculiar, because people stared at me as I went through the restaurant. I got out on the pavement, and tried to remember what I'd intended doing after lunch.

Charles said: "If I were you I'd write him an apology. It's not very dignified, but——"

"Apology be hanged! He's already had one."

"Well, you don't want more trouble on your hands—especially now."

I looked at Charles. "Do you believe it, this rumour that's going about?"

He flushed. "Should I be here with you if I did?"

I said: "He started it, didn't he, that rumour? I wish I'd broken his neck."

Charles said shortly: "This row won't help you if it gets out. It doesn't matter who provoked it. You're both hot-tempered devils. I'll go back now to see him, before he does anything silly. I'll do my best to keep him quiet."

I remembered where I'd been going then and caught a bus for Hammersmith.

Just outside the Law Courts, Victor Moreton got on the same bus. Everything seemed to be crowding on me that day, and at first I was only aware that somebody had taken the opposite front corner seat and was shaking the rain off his umbrella.

A lot of thoughts later, a heavy voice said: "Good afternoon, Branwell."

I hadn't seen him since the inquest. He looked over-size in the bus, and the grey light made his skin look poor. I muttered some sort of reply.

He said: "Dreadful day. I don't know why all the taxis seem to go off the streets at the first hint of rain."

I put my hand up to my hair and found it wet. "Yes."

"Sorry I didn't write while you were away. Been very busy. I believe Mother wrote, didn't she?"

"Yes. How is she?"

He frowned. "Not well. The shock. . . . I mean to send you a wedding present as soon as I have time to look round." He went on twisting his umbrella in his fat, capable hands. "But this month. . . . Of course, one doesn't serve on Royal Commissions purely out of altruism; but if I'd known the work involved. . . . Have you found a flat?"

I told him. I felt grateful to him just for behaving in a normal way, as if our marriage was a natural thing and not a plan to rob the dead or steal the Crown Jewels. I moved to share the seat with him. We talked, and I began some apology for not being at his brother's funeral, but he didn't seem to have thought anything of it. I felt half inclined to tell him the truth, to blurt it all out from beginning to end.

He said: "I get off at Hyde Park Corner. Sarah knows where I live. I hope you'll both come round some time."

"Thank you very much. We'd like to."

He made a note of our address, and I rubbed my knuckles, which were sore. "There's one thing I wanted to ask you," I said. "Was Tracey badly burned when you saw him?"

He looked at me, and you could see the sharp legal mind taking over.

"Badly enough. Why?"

"How did you identify him? Was it quite a job?"

"Oh, not particularly. His clothes, his shoes, his figure. It couldn't have been anybody else. What are you suggesting?"

"Did you notice if his signet ring was still on his finger?"

There was a pause. "I'm not absolutely certain. May I ask again what your point is?"

"Would you recognize it if you saw it?"

"Of course."

"Is this it?" I asked, handing him the ring.

He took it and turned it over, looked inside. "Yes, I suppose Sarah had it." He passed it back to me as if he was glad to get it out of his hands.

"This is your stop," I said. "Do you mind if I don't explain now?"

Our eyes met as he got up. "If you want to see me at my chambers you'd better ring my clerk. Or my home address after seven."

"Thanks," I said.

I watched him moving off across the pavement with his rather in-toed, fastidious walk.

It was all I could do to think straight about ordinary things; but when I got to Hammersmith there had been a new development. The thieves had been caught two hours before in actual possession of some of the furs. Abel, Collandi's adjuster, was triumphant, and I had to share his car as far as the police station at Stepney; but when we went in we found that nothing had been recovered but the cheap skins, compensation for which I'd never been contesting. Abel worked up a good show of indignation when I pointed this out to him; but I felt at my most mulish and left him there no nearer settlement than before.

I got back to the hotel about five. It was early, but I felt too sore and ragged to face the office again that day.

By now, no doubt, they'd have heard of the scuffle with McDonald. News of it would spread the rumour twice as fast.

I didn't really expect Sarah to be in when I got home—she'd said she would take the car and move some of her own personal belongings from her father's home to the new flat—and, sure enough, the room key was on its hook.

All the same, it was the first time I had not found her, and a feeling of flatness joined all the others as I walked towards the lift. Today of all days I needed her.

It was one of those self-operating lifts, and I'd just pressed the button to bring it down when a man came up and said: "Mr. Branwell?"

He was thin and grey-haired and wore rimless spectacles that clipped his nose. He looked like a retired bank cashier.

"Yes," I said.

"I wonder if—perhaps a word or two. . . . I don't know if your wife will have mentioned me. My name is Jerome."

Five minutes later we were sitting drinking tea. I said: "You're a solicitor, I believe, Mr. Jerome?"

"That is so." He fiddled in a waistcoat pocket and brought out a saccharine tablet.

"On or off the rolls?"

The tablet disappeared into the cup and left three small bubbles on the surface of the tea. "Off. A gross miscarriage of justice in March, 1931."

"You remember your dates but not your appointments."

He smiled again. "I never keep appointments, Mr. Branwell. I see my clients when the—the impulse takes me."

"You mean your victims?"

"Well. . . . There isn't as much difference as you'd think. Terms aren't really important, are they? No, nothing to eat, thank you. I daren't touch it. Diabetic."

I said: "Do you jab yourself with a needle every morning?"

"Yes. One suffers a certain wastage of flesh. It's difficult to find a new place." He buttoned his coat, and the buttonhole needed stitching. "Now, having answered all your questions. . . ."

"Not all. Who sent you?"

"If I told you that, there'd be no point in my coming . . . would there? The purpose of a go-between. . . . But you can negotiate with me in every good faith. I have full power."

"Full power of blackmail?"

Jerome swallowed stringily and put his cup down. "I'm too used to the wickedness of men, Mr. Branwell. Blackmail, arson, fraud, murder. People commit them whether one likes it or not, and we have to consider the consequences. One doesn't necessarily *condemn*."

"No. One makes a living."

"Precisely."

He thought he saw my eyes wandering and looked quickly round. But I was only looking for Sarah. He said, with sudden energy: "I'm glad your wife has told you. In the first place we were anxious to save her any embarrassment if she had kept the guilty knowledge to herself——"

"Why d'you suppose she had this knowledge and not me?"

"My instructions——"

"Or that either of us had any knowledge at all?"

"Oh, my dear sir. . . ."

Four women came into the lounge, chattering about a film they'd seen, pulling off their gloves, piling their furs and their bags, talking too long and too loudly.

I said: "And now that she's told me I suppose you feel—quite safe and among friends."

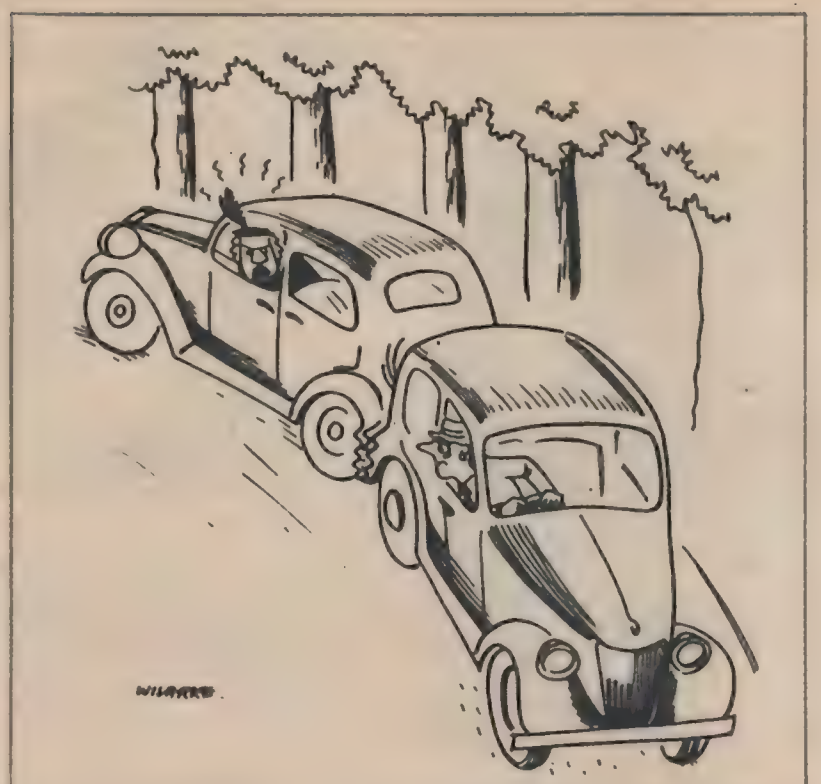
He tightened his lips disapprovingly. "What I feel is a little beside the point."

"And what is the point?"

"Fourteen thousand pounds."

I drank my own tea. "I don't know what you take us for, Mr. Jerome, but you come here with some cock-and-bull story of an insurance fraud and, without any sort of proof either that there was such a fraud or that we were in it, you expect my wife to hand over this money as if you were picking up a guinea for the church funds. When was the last time it was as easy as that?"

He took off his glasses. The mark on his nose where they pinched looked



"Couldn't you see I was backing into you?"

THE HUMAN MACHINE

Food for thought

Is reading becoming a lost art? So many people I know never seem to read. Yet I would say that reading is as important to our lives as food is to the stomach.

"Reading is to the mind what exercise is to the body," said Addison. And an old Chinese proverb says: "Three days without reading, and conversation becomes flavourless." Which is just another way of explaining that no one can expect to make bricks without straw.

by ROFFE THOMPSON

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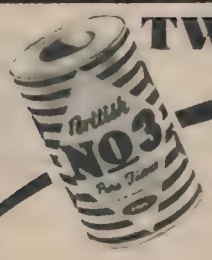

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A SOLDIER *He is only one of the many different types of skin sufferers who write, in gratitude, for the quick relief Valderma skin balm has brought them.*

(2621)

sore. He put them back and refocused, knowing well enough that my eyes hadn't moved off him.

He said: "My client has ample proof of the fraud—details of how each of the paintings was disposed of and whose hands they passed through. He also has details of how the fire was prepared. Tracey Moreton was a common swindler. *And* his wife. You—at the very least—are an accessory after the fact."

"Tell your client to come round himself. There's always tea going."

Mr. Jerome got up. I saw he was sweating. "By Tuesday put a note in the personal column of *The Times*. Just, 'Accept, O.B.' We shall want the money in cash, but I'll communicate with you later about that."

"And if I don't play?"

"If you don't—well, your wife would go to prison for the longer term."

"Yes, there is that."

He glanced at me. "Don't underrate me, Mr. Branwell. Although I'm getting on in years, I'm well able to take care of myself."

"And if we paid—how long before your next visit?"

"There'll be no other demand. We are not greedy. But, in any case, if I may say so, you're not in a position to bargain. I should certainly settle and have done with it."

"You would?"

"Yes, I certainly would."

I watched him go. He walked on his toes, as if it had paid him all his life to tread quietly. His striped trousers were too narrow and a bit too long. As he reached the outer door of the hotel I got up and followed him.

Dusk was just falling. The crowds were still thick. He walked briskly down Davies Street in the direction of Piccadilly, and when he reached it he crossed to the south side and turned into the Princes Arcade. At Jermyn Street he went east to Lower Regent Street, and walked down to Trafalgar Square.

I'd never done any shadowing before, and I don't know when he first saw me. I didn't much care. I fancy he was making for Charing Cross Station, but he changed his mind and walked down Whitehall. It was helpful of him not to take a taxi.

At Whitehall he bought an evening paper and crossed Westminster Bridge. The rain was coming on again, and half-way across he stopped to open his umbrella. I slowed, but didn't stop, because it was better to be nearer in the dark.

At the other side, he continued along Westminster Bridge Road and then turned to the right. He was a pretty good walker for his age, and I couldn't decide whether he was going somewhere or only trying to shake me off.

The streets were poor now, the way they are when you get off the main route, and the rain was trickling off my hair. Mr. Jerome stopped to let a van turn out, and I caught him up a bit more. Was I trying to catch him, I wondered, or was he trying to let me?

We came to a blitzed area where there was nothing but the street going between rubble, and weeds and a hoarding or two and, in the distance, prefabs. I put on a spurt and caught up with him and took his arm.

"This isn't your line," I said. "Why didn't you stick to keyholes?"

He tried to pull his arm free. "You'll do no good by following me like this!"

I held him till he came to a stop. He glared at me, his face red and his pince-nez shaking.

"Tell me who you're working for——"

Luckily it was raining and I heard the rubber shoes on the pavement behind me. I must have ducked at just the right moment, because the blackjack followed my head down and I got

FROM MY FAMILY ALBUM

MUCH of my life has been devoted to travel. One of my earliest memories is of the time I spent with my parents in Ceylon, shortly before my fifth birthday.

I seemed to have a flair for disorganizing things. People called me a jinx, a miniature Jonah. Coconuts would drop with greater accuracy on people's heads, monsoons do more damage, rainy seasons seem rainier, when I was around.

We stayed for a while in a big hotel in Colombo. I was happy enough. The Young White Master—as the staff, jocularly perhaps, chose to call me—had only to express a wish to conduct the ballroom orchestra and there I would be on the rostrum, upsetting the tempo and unsettling the tea-dancers.

The Young White Master's next venture was into lift operating. It was no fault of mine, surely, that the lift decided not to stop at the floor for which I pressed the button. But when we went on into the roof and were stuck there for a long time, my reputation as a jinx was considerably enhanced.

Not even the Esala Perahera, or sacred parade of Kandy, was immune from my interference. The parade is an impressive sight. Singers, drummers and dancers dressed in fantastic costumes leap and gyrate to music blown on fifes and conch shells. These are followed by a procession of elephants heralding the Temple Tusker, a huge elephant carrying sacred relics in a casket of solid gold.

So fascinated was I by the sight that I slipped away from my parents and began to follow the Tusker. The resultant chase, with my frantic parents weaving in and out among the elephants, might have provided admirable material for a film sequence by my friend Carol Reed.

I am glad to say that when I ultimately got back to England I settled down as a reasonably inconspicuous schoolboy with a passion for cricket. Cricket and travel are still my favourite pastimes.

Today he is a well-known film star. For his name, see page 31

a stinging thump on the back of the neck that made me see stars. I turned and lashed out with my fist and caught somebody in the face. It was the hardest crack I'd ever given anyone, and he disappeared somewhere among the rubble. Then I took to my heels after Jerome.

I caught him under a lamp. By now I'd given up caring whether there was anyone else about, and I gave him a shove that sent him on his knees. Then, as he sprawled, I grabbed his collar and hauled him out of the lamp-light among the weeds and the broken bottles.

By the time I'd got to the shelter of a bit of wall he was sounding worse for wear. I propped him up against the wall and took him by the collar and squeezed.

"Now. . . . The name of the man."

"Careful . . ." he got out. "My heart! Diabetic."

"Come on! Tell me."

"Can't breathe. . . ."

"The name of the man."

He suddenly went limp on me, and I let him slump. His face was the colour of the wall, and I thought I'd gone too far.

Then a police whistle sounded. I got up, and at the same moment Jerome stirred. I knelt down again and grabbed him by the throat and shook him. His eyes rolled and his breathing was horribly laboured.

"My heart," he said, "my heart."

"The name of the man!"

There were people in a knot under the farthest lamp where the buildings began again. One was a policeman, and he came along the blitzed street, staring about him.

Mr. Jerome muttered: "No, my lord. No evidence at all. If we adjourn *sine die*. . . ." For a second his eyes seemed to focus then.

"I swear to God," I said, "that if you don't tell me the name of the man, I'll kill you now before help comes." I gave him another squeeze, and his eyes fairly popped. He said something that sounded like "fish."

"Tell me the name."

"Telling you. . . . Fish. Fisher. . . ."

"Clive Fisher?"

He nodded, and I let him drop. I took a deep breath and stood up. The policeman saw me. I turned and ran. He shouted and came after me.

I ran through the rubbish and the rubble, jumping and leaping across it; came up with the prefabs as he blew his whistle again; a man came out of a door in shirt-sleeves: by the time he'd taken his pipe out of his mouth it was too late.

I was nearly garrotted on a clothes-line, and I twisted among the shacks with their bits of gardens and their unseen booby traps. At the back of them was a nine-foot wall, part of the old buildings; I jumped at this, but couldn't get a foothold. Run along it: a rat looking for a way out. Voices and footsteps behind; a light from an open door gleamed on a helmet.

A terrier shot like a rocket out of an open window, scuttling at me, barking as if I'd done him a personal injury; it was a pity to disappoint him, and he suddenly went off, yelping. I found a lower place in the wall and got over. I ploughed up a steep incline, and then fell flat as a train came roaring along the rails.

As soon as it had gone, I ducked gingerly across the rails, picking my steps, slid down the other side. Then I began to run along the edge of the embankment.

They'd lost me. After about five minutes I stopped for breath, and the shouts were a long way off. I climbed a wire fence into a cul-de-sac street and walked up it. Two or three minutes later I caught a prowling taxi and directed it back to the hotel.

SARAH was having dinner in the restaurant. She started when she saw me. "*Oliver!* What's the matter?"

"I'm all right." I slumped down in my seat, still in a lather like a horse, although I'd been upstairs first to wash and tidy up a bit.

"You look frightful." Her eyes searched mine. "And rather frightening. . . . . What is it?"

I ordered soup. "Where does Clive Fisher live?"

"In Kent. About five miles from Lowis. Why?"

"We're going down to see him."

In between the little I ate, I told her. The only thing I didn't say was the questions I'd asked Victor Moreton, earlier. Listening, she, too, forgot to eat.

"So you were right," she said.

"Yes. I always felt Clive might have something to do with it, being an artist himself and a close friend of Tracey's. But you put me off. . . ."

"It wasn't because I didn't think the same as you."

I stared at her.

She looked upset. After a minute, she said: "If you described his sister Ambrosine, who would she sound like?"

"My God! I didn't think of that. But why on earth did you scout the idea when I put it up to you?"

Sarah stared at a corner of the table, straightened her brows. "Before all this trouble blew up—when you mentioned about Clive—it seemed better to head you off. We were married, that was all that mattered. There'd been a fraud, but it was over. Nobody's

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benefited from it but me—and I was going to pay the money back. What was the use of making trouble between him and you?"

"Very considerate to him."

"It was meant to be considerate to you. Can't you see that? I'd no idea Clive would mix himself up in *blackmail*. I've always thought him a lightweight—not above earning a few dishonest pounds, perhaps—but this. . . . It's in another class. It's out of character. Or it's out of the character I gave him."

"And Ambrosine?"

"That was another reason. She'd always been in love with Tracey; and somehow, to her, selling the pictures couldn't have been more than a—an act of friendship . . . particularly if it excluded me." Sarah stirred. "At least, that's what I thought. Now I don't know what to think."

"Well," I said. "We'll find out tonight. We'll call on him."

"What will you say?"

"Something lacking in culture. I haven't yet learned to meet my troubles with a stiff upper lip."

She said: "Oh, *don't*, darling, please. . . ."

The waiter came across, and we picked through the rest of the meal.

SARAH drove because she knew the way. I thought of that other time, years ago, when she had driven me through the dark. And the thought was comforting, because in the middle of all this mess she was beside me, and somehow we had come all this way together; and everything was changed from that other time, and changed in a way I hadn't thought possible. But I was annoyed with myself for having let a shadow of that time creep back today—and, more important, come between us for a minute tonight. It was the one thing it mustn't ever do.

We didn't talk much. What we might have to say seemed unimportant until after this interview with Clive.

It wasn't half past nine when she drew up near a biggish sort of cottage.

We walked through the drizzling rain up to the door and I lifted the knocker once or twice. Sarah fidgeted with her gloves, and somewhere in the house a door banged. Then there were footsteps. The door was opened, and a woman with untidy grey hair looked out.

Sarah said: "Good evening, Mrs. Payne. Is Mr. Fisher in?"

The woman stared at her. "Oh, it's young Mrs. Moreton, isn't it? Good evening, madam. I'm sorry, Mr. Fisher's gone abroad."

"Abroad? When did he go?"

"About a week ago. I think it was

OH, JOHNNY! *by TIM*

Madeira on one of those cruises; but I couldn't be sure. He didn't leave an address."

Sarah glanced at me. "And Miss Fisher?"

"She's in Scotland, ma'am, staying with the Dundonalds. She's been up there since August."

A black cat came round the door and rubbed itself against Sarah's legs.

I said: "Surely if Mr. Fisher was going away for some time he'd leave you word where to find him."

Mrs. Payne looked at me. "Mr. Fisher does what he pleases. I'm only the housekeeper, and it isn't for me to tell him what he should do."

"Where do you forward his letters?"

"They're all here." She made a backward movement with her hand. "Sorry. I can't help you."

The door was beginning to close. I stopped it.

"May we come in?"

"Here! What's the idea! *Really*, Mrs. Moreton, I never thought. . . ."

We went in.

Sarah said: "His studio's at the back—up those stairs."

"Well, really! If you don't go at once I shall phone the police."

On a brass tray on an antique chest was a pile of letters addressed to him. Three-quarters of them looked like bills. The dates on the stamps covered most of the last ten days.

The woman came up to me. "Get out of this house at once! D'you hear me? Get out!"

I looked over her head at Sarah. "Is there anywhere we can put her?"

"There's a cloakroom here," Sarah said. "It hasn't got an outside window."

"Lay a finger on me and I'll scream the place down," Mrs. Payne said, backing away.

"Open the door," I said to Sarah, and went after the woman.

The minute I laid a hand on her arm she turned and slapped me hard in the face and let out the most piercing scream I've ever heard in my life. It just wasn't human. I dragged her, kicking at my shins, to the cloakroom and shoved her in. Sarah, who had taken the key from the inside, shut the door quickly and locked it. Her face was as white as a sheet.

THE studio was a big new room with a glass roof and an Egyptian fresco scene on the walls. There was a half-finished painting on the main easel, two or three steel chairs, an Indian brass circular table, canvases in a corner and a few modellings in bronze. I put my finger on the table and it came away dusty.

I said: "Will anybody hear her? It sounds as if we're killing pigs."

"There's another cottage down the road. We'd better not be long."

There didn't seem to be anything in the room that was going to help, but I went across to the stacked canvases and looked through them. I suppose it was expecting too much that he should have left any sort of ready-made proof lying about. The only thing of any significance was a folder of photographs of paintings, presumably taken by himself or some other amateur, and among them was a photograph, exact size, of the small Watteau that had hung in the living-room at Lowis. I detached it from the rest.

"There's this," said Sarah, as I straightened up.

She'd been looking among a pile of books on a chair and the book she held out was entitled *Art And The Cubists*, by Valentine Roget. I didn't see the point until she showed me it was a private circulating library book and that it had been taken out under the subscription of Mrs. V. Litchen. The blonde who had interviewed me from her bed. . . .

Outside, the woman had gone quiet for a minute. I said: "Where's his bedroom?"

"Round the corner. I'll show you. I'm afraid we've drawn a blank."

She went to the door, and I was following her when I caught sight of something in an ashtray on the table. I glanced up quickly at Sarah, but she was already going out. I slipped the thing into my pocket and followed her.

His bedroom had striped yellow wallpaper and maroon silk curtains. It didn't look as if it had been used for a week or so, and it's hard to fake that air of desertion. There was a desk, and I fingered through some cheque stubs, but for me the zest had gone completely out of the search.

I said: "Did he ever speak to you of going abroad?"

"No. But he has done this before, when he's been short of money—left his house and gone where his creditors couldn't find him."

The woman began again. I said: "We'd better cut it and go. I don't want another brush with the police."

We went back into the hall. "You're not going to leave her locked in?" Sarah said.

"No. You go to the car and start it. When I hear the engine I'll turn the key and come."

"Right," she said, and went.

Mrs. Payne stopped as suddenly as she'd begun. It was queer, standing there in the hall in the sudden silence. I was glad when the hum of the car came and I could unlock the door and go.

The thing I'd found in the ashtray made me feel rather sick. It was a half-smoked herbal cigarette.

To be continued next week

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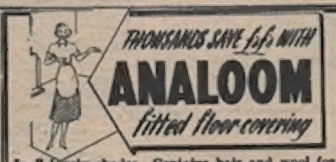

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TAKE IT FROM ME

Continued from page 20

satisfaction and to that of Charles Maxwell. On Friday, copies of it are sent out to the cast. Then, on Sunday, at four in the afternoon, we all assemble at the Paris Cinema, in Lower Regent Street.

With the cast all together, we sit around for a while, just chatting, "for mood" as Charles puts it. After a bit of this, with Dick usually supplying at least one good belly-laugh with a hilariously unprintable story, we have our first run-through.

Then, during a break for tea for the rest of the cast, the orchestra comes in with the Keynotes; and it is during that period that Frank and Denis make last-minute cuts in the script if it is running too long. At a quarter to seven we have a final run-through with dialogue, songs and music, which finishes just before the audience begins to file in at eight o'clock.

Before the actual recording, Charles welcomes the audience and introduces Denis and Frank, who, in turn, introduce the others in the show. Then Dick steps on, does a little act and introduces me—and I continue the warm-up right to the instant that the red light signals that we are on.

Result Was A Shock

In 1949, the *Daily Mail* inaugurated its National Radio Award. The readers were asked to send in ballot papers, from which the winners would be calculated. We awaited the result with mild if cynical interest.

In view of the plans we laid for the programme at the outset, we did not anticipate a very high vote. It was, therefore, as much a shock as a pleasure to be told that we had come out top of the poll in the section for the best radio show of the year.

The *Daily Mail* spared no expense in the lavish party which followed the actual presentation. Nor did we. Frank and Denis suggested in a last-minute panic that we should all wear tails for the affair. Dick tried on his tails, which he had not worn since Mafeking Night, and with a rueful smile made his way to his tailors to be measured for a new suit.

So, in a matter of just under two years we had achieved the enviable position of No. 1 variety show. Although this was a matter for self-congratulation, we never allowed it to be a reason for complacency.

I do not think there is a team of five more pessimistic characters in show business. We all immediately assumed that, having reached the top so rapidly, we would now glide down at an equal pace into oblivion. I think it was Danny Kaye who said: "When you are champion, you are up there to be knocked down"—and that was how we felt about *Take It From Here*.

Got The Giggles

But in 1951, to our amazement, we won the award again. The presentation took place at the London Coliseum, where I shared a dressing-room with Ben Lyon, Bernard Braden and Horace Percival. I took the precaution of arming myself with a bottle of whisky, which, with the willing support of my fellow artists, was quickly disposed of.

During the actual broadcast, Dick and I were joined by Sally Rogers. At this time Joy Nichols was busy having her baby and the vivacious Sally was taking her place. We thoroughly enjoyed ourselves, and at one moment some little additional quip of Dick's gave me a fit of the giggles. As a result we overran our time and the penalty had to be paid at the end of the show by Lester Ferguson, whose performance was abruptly shortened. I hope he has forgiven us by now.

NEXT WEEK: Jimmy takes up farming —and goes hunting with the hounds

FROM MY FAMILY ALBUM

The photograph on page 28 is of Trevor Howard.

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£25 plus "Coronation Heirloom": E. E. Davies, 20 Manor Way, Croxley Green: IN THIS OLD COUNTRY—REMOVE "RUST"—NOT MELLOWNESS!

OTHER AWARDS. £10: Mrs. R. A. Dummer, 51 Clifford Road, Princes Risborough: YOUTH OF TODAY—CALLED EVERYTHING—RECALL ANYTHING? £10: Mrs. M. L. Wood, 10 High Street, Newport Pagnell: IN THIS OLD COUNTRY—COPY THE CONTINENTAL *Weekday*! £5: E. Jones, 14 Coedglas Road, Llanishen, Cardiff: SHOWING THE GOVERNMENT—HOW MONEY'S SPENT—*Me*? £5: F. J. Lord, 61 Empingham Road, Stamford: HAD A GOOD INNINGS—ROBIN—HURRY UP, CUCKOO! £5: E. A. Roberts, 4 Orwell Road, Clacton-on-Sea: ON A LONELY ROAD—"GOOD-DAY!" GOES GOOD WAY. £5: R. Roulston, 2 Police Quarters, New Milton: YOUTH OF TODAY—I ENVY ONLY—*Youth*! £5: A. C. Whiteley, 153 Lockwood Scar, Newsome, Huddersfield: MOOCHING AROUND—"TRAMPLING" OPPORTUNITY HE'S SEEKING!

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King Neptune
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Smouldering Volcano
Whites And Blacks
Song Of A Bird
Madly In Love
Misleading
Man Without A Car
All Along
Not Quite The Thing
If Dad Were Chancellor
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On The Night Shift
A Side-line
Falling To Bits
Tactless
At The Fashion Parade

Incomplete "Examples" —see instructions

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Spring-cleaning The.....
Familiar .....
.....For Breakfast
Out Of His.....
Makes .....Smile

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This Way To Win

FIRST complete Square in INK, giving your Answers to Clues below. Then, if you wish to enter *one* extra Answer to any *one*, *two* or *three* Clues, give each such word in full in "Extra Answer" Form below Crossword Square.

Across Clues XWORD 827

1. Members of audience will do this if heckler suddenly interrupts speaker at quiet meeting
3. Sensible one won't attempt anything outside his range
7. May perhaps last too long
8. Foot and mouth disease has meant destruction of many a one of cattle
11. Parliament doesn't do much to interest people in this
12. Smugglers may be caught however surreptitiously they may do this into remote cove
13. It's good fun calculating and predicting these of our test team
14. May turn a person's thoughts back to conflict

Down Clues

1. Sometimes, pathetically enough, ends up with a person on rocks
2. Shouldn't be put where it will be in anyone's way, unless that's unavoidable
4. When industrial this takes place, there's likely to be considerable upset
5. Even the poorest this helps one to keep warm
6. In great many cases youngsters sent out to Korea will be this when they return
9. Valuable as relief from pain
10. In one sense may be vegetable

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XWORD 822 RESULT

WINNING WORDS. ACROSS: 1, East. 3, Boots. 5, Burked. 7, See. 9, Meal. 11, Colt. 13, Soil. 14, Bilge. DOWN: 2, Trip. 3, Beau. 4, Steal. 6, Dusk. 8, Fact. 10, Whiz. 12, Date.

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In adjudication, all Extra Answers will be read in combination with each other and with all Answers in your Square. Thus your completed Square with one extra Answer to *one* Clue will represent *two* full Squares (Entry-fee 6d.). Square with one extra Answer to *two* Clues will represent *four* full Squares (Entry-fee 1s.) and Square with one extra Answer to *three* Clues will represent *eight* full Squares (Entry-fee 2s.).

Single Square with 6d. P.O. or stamps covers dispatch to you of *Crossword Gazette* dated March 21.

Winner—sender of most meritorious set of Answers received—decided by Adjudication Committee on basis of aptness and accuracy. Ties divide. Entrants limited to one prize per Contest and to entry requiring not more than 4s. entry-fee. Signature indicates agreement to Rules.

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BULLET

EX. 6d.

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I agree to Rules and enclose P.O. value..... No.....

Signed.....

Address.....

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1,875 Closing Postmark MON., MAR. 9

CORONATION NEWS—SECURE YOUR "BULLETIN"!

For practical help with *Bullets* and Crosswords, stick 2½d. stamp on right—this brings you *Bulletin* and *Gazette* dated March 21. **688**

STICK **2½d.** STAMP here for "*Bulletin*"

CORONATION SEATS

for "John Bull" readers—

GIANT OFFER NEXT WEEK!

RULES 1. First Prize for best *Bullet* received. Others in order of merit; the test is of cleverness, aptness and originality.

2. Editor undertakes that all *Bullets* received shall be accorded careful consideration by competent Adjudicators.

3. As entry-fee enclose P.O. or stamps as indicated on coupon. Fee submitted will be taken to cover *Bullets* in coupon order—any sent in excess will be disqualified. Plain-paper entries are full rate. If using P.O. make payable to JOHN BULL, cross /& Co./, write name and address on back. Coupons must not be mutilated. Forces half-rate for *Bullets* and Crosswords for entry-fees not exceeding 2s. if coupons personally completed and Service rank indicated.

4. Entries accepted by post only and on condition that results of this week's Contests (in *Bulletin* and *Gazette*, dated March 28, and in JOHN BULL dated April 4), also Editor's decision in any matter of dispute, are accepted as final and legally binding. Odhams' employees (and families) ineligible.

(See "Daily Herald" on Saturday, March 21, for early news of *Bullets* No. 1,875 result.)

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Ah! Kensitas—that's Good!

My little dog likes making friends—
I trust that's understood.
A ladder? What's to do? I know!...
"Ah! Kensitas—that's good!"

(Kensitas—the fresher, smoother cigarette)

My fare was in an awful rush,
He caught the train (touch wood!)
And tipped me well—but what I need
Is Kensitas—that's good!

(Kensitas taste better)

Mellow, rich, good-tasting, right—
Kensitas—that's sheer delight!

OUR BELIEF, THE FINEST LEAF... KENSITAS—THAT'S GOOD!